Samīkṣikā

Series II

Text and Variations of the Mahābhārata

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Text and Variations of the Mahābhārata

Samīkṣikā Series
No. 2

The Samīkṣikā Series is aimed at compiling the papers presented by the various scholars during the seminars organized by the National Mission for Manuscripts. The seminars provide an interactive forum for scholars to present to a large audience, ideas related to the knowledge contained in India's textual heritage.

In keeping with the title, the Samīkṣikā (research) Series is concerned with research papers of distinguished scholars and specialists in different intellectual disciplines of India.

Text and Variations of the Mahābhārata:

Contextual, Regional and Performative Traditions

Edited by

Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty

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Preface

The National Mission for Manuscripts was launched in February 2003 by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, with the mandate of documenting, preserving and rendering accessible the vast reserves of manuscripts in India. The Mission, over the past four years is engaged in creating resource base for Indian manuscripts through nation-wide cultural mapping—national surveys of manuscripts, conservation and manuscriptology workshops, digitization projects, and outreach programmes with a view to bring scholars, researchers, and other interested people into the fold of manuscript studies.

Manuscripts in India go back a long way in history, with centuries of different writing cultures and practices making their way into the textual traditions of the country. In India, diverse knowledge traditions have emanated over centuries, in disciplines as extensive as philosophy, theology, art, literature or the sciences. This pluralism in experience, thought and practice has led to the flowering of diverse manuscript traditions, reflecting various canons of critical thinking and historiography.

In 2005, the Mission launched *Samīkśika,* its Seminar Series, to highlight various aspects of the Indian knowledge tradition as contained in the manuscripts of the past. Since then a number of seminars were conducted across the country, focussing on themes as diverse as medicine, architecture, Budhhist Textual Canons, the *Natyaśāstra* etc. These seminars brought together scholars, researchers, students as well as interested audience on a common platform.

The present volume presents the proceedings of the Seminar on *Text and Variations of the Mahābhārata: Contextual, Regional and Performative Traditions.* As a part of the Fourth Anniversary celebrations of the Mission, the Seminar was organised between 5-7 February, 2007, at the India International Centre, New Delhi. The Seminar was divided into four themes, namely, the 'Textual Complex of the Mahābhārata: Diverse Traditions'; 'Regional, Folk and Popular Narratives Contributing to the Text of the Mahābhārata'; 'Mahābhārata in Visual and Performing Arts: Texts, Contexts and Images'; and, 'The Principles of Puruṣārtha in the Mahābhārata'. With papers from some of the stalwarts and renowned scholars in Mahābhārata Studies, the seminar attempted at grappling with the traditions and variations of this great epic across India and beyond, while taking a fresh look at the text itself.

Introduction

Kalyan Kumar Chakravarty

The present volume delves into the textual, oral, visual and performing arts traditions of the Mahābhārata in its ecumenical, classical versions and regional interpretations, in India and Southeast Asia, and in subaltern reconstructions. It is an exercise in locating the ways in which the Mahābhārata has been understood in different places and times, and the manner in which it has endowed diverse community traditions with life, vibration and meaning.

A quest for values underlies and underwrites the discourses, presented in this volume.

In the *Puruṣārthacatuṣṭaya* or the quadriga of human values, celebrated in the Mahābhārata, *artha* and *kāma*, wealth and pleasure, constitute the empirical pair. It is geared to the spiritual pair of *dharma* and *mokṣa*, discharge of spiritual, moral and social *ṛṇa*, debt, to *devas*, *ṛṣis* and *pitṛs*, Gods, sages and ancestors. It is the road to the summum bonum of *mokṣa* or liberation. It is a search for the bliss of communion and not a hedonistic pursuit of sensual pleasure. The reflective consciousness discriminating between *śreyas* from *preyas*, characterizes this search, and this is the subject of discourse in Śāntiparvan (D. Prahladachar).

The wealth gathered by *nyāya*, legitimate means, is the essence of *Rājadharma* or royal code of conduct in both *Tulādhāra Jāvāli saṃvāda* in the Mahābhārata as well as in the *Arthaśāstra*. The pursuit of material wellbeing is not divorced from spiritual wellbeing. Wealth garnered without performing *dāna*, *yajña*, *sadācāra*, *veda* or *satya*, gift, sacrifice, good conduct, knowledge or truth, is sterile. The *tantrayukti* section of the *Arthaśāstra* is concerned with human subsistence in the *manuṣyavatībhūmi*, human habitat. This is accepted as a fundamental concern in the extended area of the state in the Mahābhārata also. (Nrisinha Prasad Bhaduri).

Vīra rasa or the heroic spirit is embraced as an attribute of *dharma.* Victory in war sustains *lokayātrā,* the collective pursuit of *sanātana dharma,* the traditional ethical order. This is synonymous with the human engagement with the eternal ethic of *satya, dama, tapa, śauca, santoṣa, hrī, kṣamā, ārjava, jñāna, śama, dayā* and *dhyāna,* truth, self control, penance, purity, satiety, modesty, forgiveness, energy, wisdom, patience, compassion and meditation. Dharma is not inflexible or monolithic but flexible, adapted to the diverse circumstances of life. (Satkari Mukhopadhyaya)

The teacher of music is, therefore, hailed in the Mahābhārata for leading the student to *śreyas, mokṣa,* to goodness and liberation. A *bhāvajña,* a master of meanings and expressions, he is completed by the right audience of *rasikas, sāmājikas* and *vimarśakas,* knowledgeable about flavours of emotions, rules of social interaction and discriminative reflection. He is made whole by students fulfilling *jāti dharma* and *kulācāra,* the code of conduct, appropriate to their social niche and lineage. He is not a trader in learning but a saintly person. He rejects superfluous causes, and reconciles contradictory texts. He applies general principles to particular cases, and refers contraries to different situations. He does not discriminate between students of noble birth and quality. He teaches them to concern themselves with what is before them and to act on what they should. (Leela Omcherry)

The Mahābhārata tradition is complex and not monolithic in its pursuit of *Puruṣārthas.* This is evident from the besetting preoccupation with the element of the tragic in the demonic other, in the performance of *Karṇamokṣam* in the Katāikūttu tradition in South India, in a kind of a sacrificial rite, which celebrates the possession of Karṇa by the demonic quality of Tanāsura or Naraka, and condemns him to play a role on the wrong side of dharma, and destroy himself, in full consciousness of his fate. (Hanne M de Bruin).

The *pratināyaka,* the anti hero, is celebrated in Bhāsa's *Karṇabhāra,* and also in Kuṭiyāttam and Kathakali theatre in Kerala. The actor as an interpreter and narrator invokes war as the ultimate victor, death as the hero, which brings out love and innocence in the heart, hardened against these. Face to face with death, Duryodhana knows the value of maternal love for the first time. The *pūrva pakṣa* or prologue of the Mahābhārata is completed by Harivaṁśa, which provides *tṛṣṇākṣaya sukha*, felicity, born of destruction of desires, as the epilogue. The demonic force is also celebrated in the depiction of Draupadī as a warrior goddess, *Vīrapāñcālī*. Draupadī is both *Devī* and *Dāyan* in Muslim regional epics. (K.G.Paulose).

The relentless working of the tragic flaw leads human beings to spurn salvation, refuses to belong to one another, or to God. It compels them to play out their destiny to a bitter and abortive end. The heroic battle between the good and evil, the dissolution of dreams in dust and ashes, provide the titanic scale, complexity and poignancy to the Mahābhārata characters. The depiction of Draupadī by Mallika Sarabhai or Shaoli Mitra, or the cinematic and theatrical presentations by B.R. Chopra and Rahi Masoom Raza have, while Peter Brooks's film lacks, this tragic grandeur. The epic is thus read as relevant to the hour, not in terms of a remembered past, a projected future, but of a present, when the best lack all convictions, the worst are full of passionate intensity, and only an anguished cry can be raised about the eternal indifference to the voice of *dharma*. (Pradip Bhattacharya)

The volume has also described the indexical dislocation, symbolic inversion and subversion, ruptures, discontinuities and pluralities, articulated in vernacular versions of the epic.

Female liberty has been associated with tribal matrilineal and liminal patriarchal traditions of Kuru Pāñcāla Janapada outside the metropolitan centres of Madhyadeśa. Women are entitled to *mokṣa* only after performing the *kāma saṃskāra*, the rites of love. In *svayamvara*, the women are the price of manly valour, *vīrya śulkā*. (Shalini Shah) On the other hand, the Bheel Bharath describes the primal quality of sexual longing and the radiant celebration of sex without any moral taint or tirade in a vivid account of the disgrace of Arjuna and rape of Draupadī by Vāsuki Nāga. The aggressive courtship of Arjuna by women, the dalliance of Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa, disguised as a bangle seller, are described without any prudish criticism. Gaṅgā dominates Śāntanu. Kuntī is born of Śakti, aureoled in awesome glory. Draupadī invites all the wives of Arjuna to a feast. The Yakṣa in *yakṣapraśna* poses as a *jalayoginī*, a water sorceress testing a man, as virgin water which cannot be taken away without marriage. Indrāṇī chastises roguish sages and chides Indra for not doing so with the searing rebuke, "woman's body is not something to etch their art work on." Uttarā is the courageous wife of child courage, Balormmat Abhimanyu, and looks for *amarkuppi* to save him. The women have their own *gurus.* They are neither in abject dependence on men nor are they neurotically self critical. (Satya Chaitanya).

In the Mewati Mahābhārata of the tribal pastoral Meo Muslims, the narrator performer, the Mirashi singer, invokes Goddess Bhavānī along with *Ustad* and Allah, for inspiration, so that they can please the *pāriyā* audience, and make them *rājī* or agreeable. There is a debate between Guru Gorakh and disciple Augad, the voice respectively of orthodoxy and modernity, about the legitimate role of women, as courtesans or ascetics. Gorakhnath or Purān Bhagat gives fertility to barren Gangadhar and Kunta, makes the garden green and fills the lake with water. (Shail Mayaram).

Draupadī Āmmā, Gāndhārī Āmmā are worshipped by depressed classes in Tamil Nadu. In the Ārāvān festival, transvestites and hermaphrodites celebrate the birth of Ārāvān from the loins of Arjuna and snake woman Ulupi. Kṛṣṇa spends a night with Ārāvān, assuming feminine form. Ālli Arāsāni Mālāi learns martial arts in a *Gurukula,* and wins back the Pandyan kingdom in war. She punishes the love smitten Duryodana, and parades him in the street, nailed on a ladder. She is reluctant to submit to Arjuna, who seduces and hypnotizes her in the guise of a Sanyāsī, a transvestite, a snake, drugs her with passion and rolls on her "like a mustard on a polished mirror, a bee on a jasmine flower." A variant of the myth are of princess Pavazhakkodi, who is seduced by Arjuna, and of Queen Perarasiyar, daughter of Purushān Devī, conceived from pollen ,carried by southern winds from Sri Lanka. (Vijaya Ramaswamy)

The oppositional, counter cultural, transgressive traditions of folk Mahābhāratas, nursed by Nāths, Bairāgis, Yogīs and

Sātpant Ismāilis in the twelfth or thirteenth c., or by the Meo Muslims in the eighteenth c., have also been celebrated in the volume.

The Pāṇḍun brothers are depicted as pastoral brothers in the Mewati Mahābhārata, the Pāṇḍun Kā Kārā, the war of the Pāṇḍins and Kāirus. They challenge exclusive Rajput claims to authority and set out for a kingdom without authoritarian kingship. The Meo Muslims come from the untouchable Dhāḍhi subcaste, and sing the Mahābhārata in *dohās,* in the popular Rajasthani *Diṅgal Apabhraṁśa.* They claim to be Joduvamshis and have been in constant conflict with the centralizing Muslim, Jat, Rajput and British kingdoms in the area between Vraja and Kurukṣetra. *Satyavādī Rājans* are hailed for royal rectitude, for acting as fences to protect the fields, their domains. (Shail Mayaram)

The transgressive nature of the regional texts is also articulated in the close connection of the floral and faunal in the human world. The search for the rhino by Arjuna, Pāṇḍu's birth as a street dog, birth of Kuntī and Gāndhārī from a dead eagle, in *Bheel Bhārath,* the overwhelming dominance of Vāsuki Nāga, over Arjuna and Draupadī, the birth of Ālli in a flower, the entry of Arjuna into the Ālli's apartment in the guise of a snake, are examples. (Satya Chaitanya)

The episode of shadow piercing or *Nilalkkuttu* is adapted, in the Ādiparvan performance of the older Malayalam work, *Thirunilamālā,* and from oral *paṭṭus, āṭṭakathās* and Kurumbā and Pāṇa aboriginal songs. The local folk and tribal traditions provide background to the atavistic shamanistic description of deviant *abhicāra* and *counterabhicāra* rituals, used to put the Pāṇḍavas to sleep, or to revive them, in classical Malayalam theatre performances. (A. Purushothaman and A. Harindranath)

The volume also describes the journey of the Mahābhārata to Southeast Asia and East Asia through Buddhist *jātakas, avadānas,* legends, and its mutations in local folklore and myth.

In the process of this diffusion, the epic is installed, taught, sculpted and recited, in the temples of Kampuchea. Eighteenth, ninteenth centuries Thai works deal with the story of Aniruddha and Usha. The rhythm, culture and grace of the epics are transmitted through *purvās*, *kākavins*, specially the Kākavin Bhāratayuddha, and *parvans* in Indonesia, the *Wayang Kulit*, performed by ritual *Dālāng* artists and *Gamelān* orchestra. There are parallels to the epic stories in Chinese and Mongolian versions. (Lokesh Chandra) In the inscriptions, the Kings and heroes are equated with Viṣṇu, Śiva and Buddha in their life and work. The recitation of the epics is seen as contributory to royal victory and prosperity. Japanese *Kābuki* drama tells the story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, renamed as Ekaśṛṅga. The theme of giant Vakāsura and its Japanese counterpart Shutenboji, the story of Urvaśhī and Śakuntalā and the fairy maiden Hagoramo in Japanese Noh play also show the links. The dialogical style of discourse is shared by Korean and Zen Buddhism with the epic, specially for solving riddles on practical problems. (Anita Khanna)

The volume describes the preliminary step, taken for preparing a critical edition to understand the epic philology in terms of the *dṛṣṭa* path to the *mantras* visualized; the *śruta* path for retrieval of orality; *kṛta* path for reaching the core through various readings, via heuristics, recensio, emendations and higher criticism; and the *prokta* path of reconciliation of diverse readings. (Vasant Kumar Bhatt) There is also an attempt, in the manner of Western scholarship, to examine the epic threadbare, in terms of *melopoiia,* melody, *lexis,* direction, *opsis,* spectacle, *mythos,* plot, *ethos,* characters and setting, *dianoia,* concepts, following the tradition, inaugurated in Aristotle's Poetics. (Mehta 1990)[1]

There is a discussion on the methodology adopted for preparing a critical, definitive and consensual edition of the Mahābhārata for the first time by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute under the general editorship of V.N. Sukhtankar. In this exercise, begun in 1925, 1300 manuscripts have been examined by 1966. It has been established that both the southern and northern recensions and their eight versions in diverse scripts are independent copies of a single text, transmitted orally. In this critical edition, the most common, mutually agreeable denominators have been brought together with a preference for the least tampered Kashmir version. Solecisms considered original have been preserved. Readings adjudged different and timetested interpolations have been included in the footnotes and appendix. In this manner, contradictions generated in oral transmission have been respected instead of resorting to the vulgate or the best text available. (M.A. Mehendale) In the process of this philological exercise, the attempt to strip Draupadī has been detected as apocryphal, added by later redactors. The evidence for this is considered to be minimal, inconclusive and contradictory, in the absence of any allusion in any Purāṇa, including the Bhāgavata, Harivaṃśa or post Mahābhārata plays. The story is considered to be an interpolation, even in the critical edition. (Pradip Bhattacharya).

Use of modern technology, including speech recognition, minimization of data entry, alignment of data with original manuscripts, conversion of data base format, word or phrase level search, highlighting of the images, collation of readings, generation of reports, retrieval, mark up and publishing have been discussed for deciphering, editing, indexing, searching and preparing a concordance of texts on the epic, along with other Vedic texts. The electronic and statistical surveys of the subjunctive forms of the epic have been seen as being outside the epic verbal system. As such, ślokas, violative of Piṅgala's provisions, are being analyzed, in terms of digital philology, on an interactive global platform. The affinities and differences are being read as e-texts. Formulaic and grammatical patterns are being used to trace the bardic epic. A biological phylogenetic analysis of various approaches to the epic is being undertaken for similar and dissimilar manuscript readings. (P. Ramanujan)

A discussion of the variant meanings of the Mahābhārata has been undertaken, in the attempt to penetrate the historical layers and reach the core text. The epic has been read as an account of the defeat of virtuous Śiva worshipping Kauravas by Vaiṣṇava Pāṇḍavas; an eschatology of creation and destruction, played out by Viṣṇu and Śiva; a war between Gods and demons; a solar drama, telescoping natural phenomena into a mythic format; an intra tribal or anti Brahmin conflict; a conspectus for a social organization, based on a dual, Indo

Iranian Phratrie; a historical event; an Indo European myth, transmitted through pre-Vedic, Vedic and para Vedic characters; as a theme modelled on Rājasūya sacrifice. It is a story, rethought and retold through a diversity of oral traditions, regional rituals and dramatic performances, and translated into variant texts against an archetype. Its contemporary resonance is felt in its appreciation by Hollywood as an eternal human story; as an allegory about a nuclear armageddon, and, in its universal appeal as an epic of global significance. (Saroja Bhate)

The ramifications of the textual, oral, visual and performing art traditions, in their essence and diffusion, have been examined in this volume through history. The examination shows how an oral tale, conveyed through a face to face relationship between a narrator and an auditor, changes with the Westernizing scholarly enterprise to excise the retellings and to edit the mythic and human narrative into a coherent whole. And yet, the ruling theme of the Mahābhārata as a *philosophia perennis* survives through all the changes. Alternatively called *itihāsa, purāṇa, akhyāna*, Mahābhārata has sprouted from the dialogical Ṛgvedic hymns, genealogical myths and narratives, *gāthās*, verses and *nārasaṁśī* songs in praise of heroes in Brāhmaṇas. An open, fluid text, improvised by ministrels, it has evolved through *upākhyāna*, story telling, *sūtra*, dialectic, *praśnottara*, question and answer, and *saṁvāda*, dialogue. It has gone through successive layers of the original *Jaya* of 18,800 stanzas, *Bhārata saṃhitā* of 24,000 stanzas and Mahābhārata of 100,000 stanzas, reportedly done in succession by Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Ugraśravas Sauti. Repetition, elaboration, variation and oscillation of outcomes, recapturing older events and anticipating later ones, overlapping references, passages, emotions, double espousal and parentage in kinship, the ambiguity of argument, preceding and succeeding major experiences and acts, have characterized the Mahābhārata as a tradition rather than a text. The uncertainty, complexity and the variety implicit in the tradition continues to characterize the tremendous creative surge in the folk traditions, which continue to vibrate in living literary and dramatic creations. The changes in the pitch, gesture, emotional accent, story telling styles, mimes, costumes, masks have been used in the folk tradition to dredge the amazing diversity of thinking and emoting from the womb of the pristine story.

The volume has offered a glimpse of how, in folk operas all over the country, the bardic tradition has been localized, contemporarized and proximitized, in order to bring blessings to the family, to win affluence for the community, to control demonic forces, exorcise bad spirits, and transform life and landscape by assimilating the actors with the gods, whose role they play. The bardic lore has been transmitted through the actor performers, who have different names like *kathaks, sutas, bandins, magathas, granthikas, kuśīlavas, bharatas, pāṭhakas,* and *dhārakas.* It has undergone transformation in the *Wāree Leebā* of Manipur, *ojāpalli* of Assam, *Pālā* of Orissa, *Chhāu* dance of Purulia, *Yātrā* of West Bengal, *Nauṭaṅki* of Uttar Pradesh, *Pāṇḍavāni* of Chhattisgarh, *Ākhyāna* of Gujarat, *Pāṇḍavleelā* and Hiḍimbā stories of Uttarakhand, *Harikathā* of south, Kathakaḷi and *Kuṭiyāttam* of Kerala, *Yakṣagāna* of Karnataka, *Terukūthu* of Tamil Nadu and shadow theatre in Southeast Asia. The versifiers, songsters and puppeteers have presented the Mahābhārata in spectacular dramas, in which local gods migrate into the bodies of the actors, as *dhāmi,* abodes, the Pāṇḍava līlā or, are invited, to dance with actors, in *Jagār,* in Uttarakhand. These performances are suffused with devotion, that imbues the being with the desire of becoming. Popular myths have been invented to explain parthenogenesis, *ayonija,* miraculous, nonhuman births of great heroes and saviours, with the accompaniment of signs and wonders. *Kānini putra* and *Niyoga* of Kuntī, who has an impotent husband, for getting children outside wedlock, have figured in Kannada myths.

Cultural landcapes have been translated into mental atlases by the continuing vogue of the epic narrative tradition. The sites associated with the death of Abhimanyu, Rājā Karṇa, Bhūriśravas, burning of the dead soldiers in the epic battle have been identified in Kurukṣetra. Archaeology has located the post Harappan and P.G. ware culture of the Bhārata war at Hastināpura, Atrañjikherā and Kurukṣetra. Baba Kanval Das of Sahabali, has related himself to Vyāsa, and used his skills as a storyteller and healer, to enliven the narrative landscape of Kurukṣetra in the twentieth century. The theme of Ālli, produced by matrilocal Tamil society, has been reinvented in patrilocal Tamil society and films in the twentieth *c.* In the Mahanadi river delta, in Orissa, the epic has provided the story of Śakuntalā in the Udayagiri cave panels in second *c.* BC., Sarla Dasa's Mahābhārata in fifteenth *c.*, and of Routray's Draupaḍira Sāḍhi, the robe of Draupadī, in the twentieth century.

The epic has served as a site for rites of sacrifice and consecration, assimilation of royal and godly virtues through history. In the tenth *c.* Pampā Bhārata, patron Harikeśari has been identified with Arjuna. The *Ardhamāgadhī* Jaina canon has identified Kṛṣṇa as *Śalākāpuruṣa* Vāsudeva, and Jarāsandha as prati-Vāsudeva, akin to the *pratināyaka,* the anti hero of Bhāsa, *Kuṭiyāṭṭam* or *Kathākali* theatre. Draupadī's daughter has found her place in *Nayadhamma kahāo,* and Nemi has predicted *antagadadasāo,* destruction of the Yādavas. The *khatti dhamma* has been transformed from pursuit of power, pelf, penal authority and war, to service of the people and the state, in the Buddhist doctrine of *Dhammarāja.* The themes of *Kṛṣṇa līlā, Cīraharaṇa, Kirātārjunīya, Bhīṣmastavarāja,* Nala Damayantī, *Kīcakavadha,* Aniruddha, *Arjuna vivāha, Abhimanyu vivāha,* abduction of Rukmiṇī have been shown again and again in temple art, murals, miniatures or manuscript illustrations. Playful poetic license has been displayed to spectacular effect in old Javanese in *Maṅgalācaraṇa* in the *Aṣṭādaśa parvan* in Indonesia. The *maṅgala* is addressed to king Jayābhaya as incarnation of Viṣṇu in Harivaṁśa parvan and Bhāratayuddha. The Indonesian king has been seen as an incarnation of Viṣṇu or Śiva in the poetry of Mph Sedah on Mph Punulu between eleventh to the thirteenth *c. Pārtha Yāna* or Arjuna's journey to Mt. Indra Kīla in the relief Candi Jago temple has been depicted in thirteenth *c.* and has served as a theme in Majapahit and post Majapahit poetry. The Malay Hikayat Pandava Jaya is written in the Jawi, Perso-Arabic script in the fifteenth *c.* The 49m. bas-relief, the longest in the wrold, on the epic, has figured in Khmer art in Angkor Wat, in the twelfth *c.* The

Mahābhārata has been translated into Persian under Akbar in the sixteenth century with paintings of Dasawant. In seventeenth and eighteenth *c.* Rajput courts, *Aśvamedha ro pāno* has been performed in memory of the *yajña* of Yudhiṣṭhira. King Paramanujit of Thailand, has written Krishna Son Nong in nineteenth *c.*

The epiphany of Kṛṣṇa as Master of *bhakti rasa,* rather than of *amor intellectualis,* presiding over the holocaust, with *ānṛśaṁsya* or compassion, even as *kāla Viśvarūpa;* as an uncaused cause, unmoved mover, is the hub, around which the story of the epic revolves. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana is the moving spirit in this hub. He is an absentee author as well as begetter of the main role players, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu, a *deux ex machina,* present everywhere and yet nowhere. He is both a poet of being and becoming, an interpreter of the numinous, an author, whose work carries no signature worthy of the deconstructive lucubration of a Derrida, who talks of the world of becoming and conveys the truth of Being, a Master of *pratismṛti,* recollection, who reaches out to the reality and lets it disclose itself,[2] who translates a heroic lay, a *chanson de geste,* into a great existential philosophical poem.[3] (Krishna Chaitanya 1990) Tao Te Ching mentions thirteen spokes, which are useless without the hub, which they share. The clay, shaped into a vessel, is useful only because of the hollow within. The room is useful only when holes are cut in it. Profit comes from what is there, but value comes from what is not there.

The poem deals with being more rather than having more, with human imperatives, derived from the deep structure of the world. It is in search of a cosmic programme, in which man can work, being *yogārūḍha* rather than *yantrārūḍha.* The objective is to attain humanness through *savijñāna Jñāna,* knowledge aligned with wisdom, by endowing human endeavour with *nīti,* sagacity. The epic is the same tree of *manyu,* anger, and *dharma,* ethical order, with eighteen branches, *parvan,* which has to be used for ascent and cut with detachment. It is the *ygdrasil,* the upright and uprooted tree of life, the journey as well as destination. It mediates between the human and divine, Nara and Nārāyaṇa, ritualism and gnosticism, activism and asceticism, theism and humanism. It provides bridges between two philosophical traditions. One is the *Nyāya Vaiśeṣika* perspective about human souls being like material atoms, coming together at divine will, choosing between good and bad, under the circumstance of their birth. The other is the *Sāṁkhya* concept of *Yoga*, the process of evolving the world out of the manifest material abode of potential. On the one hand, the epic sees the lord and devotee as united in devotion. On the other, it sees the Lord as an embodiment at all the ideal predicates in a world, which is his body and reminder, of which he is the instrumental and material cause. In this manner, the epic combines the empirical with the transcendental, metaphysics with physics.

The suggestion of the ruling sentiment being disenchantment in terms of tragedy unmitigated emerges from the story of the war as an all engulfing conflagration, a great carnage, a universal sacrifice in the maw of time. The epic has been seen as providing the backdrop to the modern world, a waste land of devastation and extinction, described in terms of an archaeology of broken columns. The heroic age has been reassessed by an age of enlightenment. A transition has been charted from an aristocratic and ritual order to a new complex order of spititual homelssness, miscegenation, moral and psychological uncertainty.

All the values, *puruṣārthas,* have been highlighted, all *rasas* demonstrated in the Mahābhārata. And yet, *śānta* is propagated as the main *rasa,* a *sthāyibhāva,* an enduring emotion, and *mokṣa* is revealed as the ultimate *puruṣārtha.* The epic is committed to *nivṛtti* and *ahiṁsā,* withdrawal and non violence, but preaches *ānṛśaṁśya,* non injury, clemency, adopted to the *pravṛtti mārga,* the worldly way, in the interest of *gṛhastha* and *rājadharma,* house holder and royal ethic, adjusted to the human condition. The *daṇḍanīti,* the penal law, is ethically metamorphosed in the person of the Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira. The divisive vision of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, '*māmakāh Pāṇḍavāścaiva,*' my people and those of Pāṇḍu, is pitted against Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, who reflect each other, like clean mirrors, and of Sañjaya, who melts like a saltdoll in love for them. In the Aśvamedha parvan, *mama,* mine, *namama,* not mine the three lettered sacrificial formula, coexist, impelling mortals to fight and to die.

Moha, illusion clouds Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mind about the relentless march to destruction. It is evident in his words, *yadā śausam,* ever since I have learnt, and *tadā nāśaṃse vijayāya Śañjaya,* since then I have lost all hope of victory, the beginning and end of evey stanza. Śvetaketu questions the institution of marriage, Yudhiṣṭhira that of the state, Arjuna the Kṣatriya's duty to fight, Janaka, the need of a gṛhastha to live a worldly life.[4] (Pande 1990)In Bhāsa's Karṇabhāra, in Karṇamokṣam in Katāikuttu and Karṇa Tāndhing in Javanese Wājñng Wong, the *kavaca* and *kuṇḍala,* become Karṇa's burden of gift to Indra, a gift begging glory and death. The eschatology of the end of the world or the fate of the individual after demise, the creation *ex nihilo* of everything, are attributed to the wheel of *karma.* The ritual, moral and aesthetic aspects of *anuśāsana,* discipline, are ascribed to *kṣatriya svadharma,* the code of conduct of the ruling warrior class. This, in turn, is counterpoised to *mokṣa dharma.* These are the various attempts to answer the problems of theodicy in the epic. These are but reflections of the various aspects of the truth. As is said, the changes in shadow are but changes of light.

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Key to Transliteration

VOWELS

अ a	आ ā	इ i	ई ī	उ u	ऊ ū
(but)	(palm)	(it)	(beet)	(put)	(pool)
ऋ ṛ	ए e	ऐ ai	ओ o	औ au	
(rhythm)	(play)	(air)	(toe)	(loud)	

CONSONANTS

Guttural	क ka	ख* kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ ṅa
	(skate)	(blockhead)	(gate)	(ghost)	(sing)
Palatal	च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña
	(chunk)	(catchhim)	(john)	(hedgehog)	(bunch)
Cerebral	ट ṭa	ठ* ṭha	ड/ड़ ḍa	ढ*/ढ़ ḍha	ण* ṇa
	(start)	(anthill)	(dart)	(godhead)	(under)
Dental	त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na
	(path)	(thunder)	(that)	(breathe)	(numb)
Labial	प pa	फ* pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma
	(spin)	(philosophy)	(bin)	(abhor)	(much)
Semi-vowels	य ya	र ra	ल la	व va	
	(young)	(drama)	(luck)	(vile)	
Sibilants	श śa	ष ṣa	स sa	ह ha	
	(shove)	(bushel)	(so)	(hum)	
Others	क्ष kṣa	त्र tra	ज्ञ jña	ळ* l	ऋ* ṝ
	(*ksātriya*)	(*triśūla*)	(*jñānī*)	(play)	

अं (—) *ṁ* or *ṃ amusūra* (nasalisation of preceding vowel) like *saṁskṛti/or soṃskṛti*

अः *visarga* = *ḥ* (aspiration of preceding vowel like (*prātaḥ*)

ऽ *Avagraha* consonant #' consonant (like-*imé vasthitā*)

Anusvāra at the end of a line is presented by m (म्) and not *ṁ*

*No exact English equivalents for these letters.

SECTION I

Textual Complex

1

The Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata:

Its Constitution, Achievements, and Limitations[1]

M.A. Mehendale

The Mahābhārata forms a significant part of the Indian literary tradition. Its significance, in terms of an authoritative text on ancient Indian religion, philosophy, mythology and social and political institutions, lies next only to the Vedas. In fact, the Mahābhārata is recognized as the fifth Veda composed by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana {*kārṣṇaṃ vedam imaṃ vidvān . . . 1.1.205; vedān adhyāpayāmāsa mahābhāratapañcamān* (1.57.74; 12.327.18)}. But unlike the Vedas, the text of the Mahābhārata is not uniform. It has come down to us in two recencions—the Northern and the Southern, and eight different versions. Five of them viz. the Kashmiri, the Nepali, the Maithili, the Bengali and the Devanagari belong to the Northern recension, and remaining three to the Southern. The eight versions are handed down in many scripts, since each version is identified with the script in which it is written.

The need was felt, therefore, for a critical edition of the Mahābhārata. A sound basis for any scientific study of the epic was felt since long, and in 1897 it was first voiced in by M. Winternitz at the eleventh International Congress of Orientalists held in Paris. Though not considered seriously in the beginning, the project was promoted at the

International Association of the Academies in Europe and America in 1904. As a consequence Prof. H. Lüders published in 1908, a small specimen copy of the critical text[2] with the first sixty seven stanzas of the Ādiparvan which constitute a total of twelve pages of the present Pune edition. The specimen text was based on twenty-nine selected manuscripts available to Prof. Lüders in Europe. However, this significant project in Europe had to be halted due to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

In 1917, a year before the end of the war in 1918, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute was established in Pune. On 6 July, 1918, the Institute resolved to undertake the challenging task of publishing the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata. The initial work of collecting manuscripts was begun, and in April 1919, Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar formally initiated the project by writing on the collation sheet the opening auspicious mantra:

Nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya naraṁ caiva narottamam/
devīṁ sarasvatīṁ caiva tato jayam udīrayet//

Manuscripts were collected from all over India, and following a careful study, the selected manuscripts were collated under supervision of Mr. N. B. Utagikar, the then In-charge of the Institute's project. In 1923, Mr. Utagikar published a specimen copy of the critical edition of the entire Virāṭaparvan for critical opinion of the scholars. The real work, however, got started when Dr. V. S. Sukthankar became the first General Editor of the Critical Edition in 1925. Under his editorship the first fascicule of the Ādiparvan comprising the first two adhyāyas was published in 1927. The whole of the Ādiparvan was completed in 1933 and the entire edition of all the eighteen parvans in 1966.[3]

Constitution of the Critical Text

The editors of the Critical Edition were conscious of two things right from the beginning of the work; first, their work meant a search in the manuscript traditions of the Mahābhārata, and second, what they were set to achieve was not an ideal edition of the text, but certainly the first and the most essential step towards that end. It was necessary, therefore, to look for the various manuscripts spread all across the country, and after a keen examination of the manuscripts, the selection of those which were to be used for the critical edition.[4] While selecting, old manuscripts were chosen in favour of the more recent ones, and discrepant manuscripts in place of agreeing ones. Mere copies of older manuscripts were discarded, and the stanzas of each version written down. The ground was thus laid for constituting the critical text. The editor had before him, in the form of the collation sheets, the entire manuscript evidence at a glance. The three following methods were suggested for establishing the critical text:

1. It was suggested that to begin with, critical editions of all the eight versions be prepared, which would then be combined into the final single edition. This was discarded as it was not feasible in practice. In the first instance, this would have required a large number of workers and consequently, large funds. Next, it was not possible to prepare a satisfactory critical edition of any single version without consulting the readings of other versions. Finally, the editor of the final edition would have to consult the readings of the different versions and bring together the entire critical apparatus of the different versions on a single page. That would amount to duplication of work.
2. Another suggestion was to start with the vulgate text as the base and then print the different readings of other manuscripts in footnotes. Each reader would then have the opportunity to choose the reading he thought was original, and thus constitute his own critical text. This suggestion was again discarded because an average reader was not expected to have the qualifications

required to determine the proper reading from among the entire corpus placed at his disposal. Moreover, the aim of the Institute was to place in the hands of the reader a single critical edition and not to produce material for hundreds of critical editions.

3. A third suggestion was a variant of the second. According to it, one should take as the base, not the vulgate, but the best manuscript of any version, correct the obvious errors of the copyist of that manuscript and print it giving the readings of other manuscripts in the footnotes. Even this suggestion was discarded because our manuscripts are not very old, going generally as far back as only the sixteenth century.[5] Also, even the text of the best manuscript would have undergone revisions and additions in oral tradition across the centuries.

The Institute therefore chose to bring out a single edition in its final from. This work had two aspects:

(i) If the text of a stanza was not uniform in all the manuscripts, then different readings would be examined to determine which one was to be admitted into the critical text. The rest would be relegated to the footnotes. Emendation of the text i.e. accepting a reading which was not documented by any manuscript but was suggested by them had to be as far as possible, avoided. Any emendation had to be justified on firm grounds.

(ii) If certain parts of the text, consisting of a single stanza, a small group of stanzas, or longer passages making up whole adhyāyas were genuine or spurious.

Principles of constitution

(i) The main principle, and the obvious one, was to accept that variant or text as, original, which was uniformly documented in all versions. This principle could be symbolically stated as if N = S then, 'original', (i.e. a text which was documented by all manuscripts alike of both the N (Northern) and the S (Southern) recensions. There were numerous cases where the editors were faced not with ideal cases as above, but with fluctuations and in such situations difficulties arise while choosing the text.

(ii) In such cases that reading was chosen (a) which was attested by the largest number of manuscripts in both the versions, and (b) by applying the exterior of intrinsic probability.

(iii) In case of double agreement, Dr Sukthankar accepted that agreement in which the Kashmiri version figured. This was because the Kashmiri version is the least conflated due to the difficulty of the Kashmiri script and the not easily accessibility of Kashmir.

(iv) If all the versions of the northern recension agreed against all the versions of the southern recension, Dr. Sukthankar, as a stop-gap, accepted the reading of the northern recension.

Cases were mostly instances of synonyms, for example,

kopa-roṣa-krodha, vibhu-prabhu, dvija-vipra, pannageśvara-pannagottama, parasparevadhaiṣiṇaḥ-paras pare jighāṁsayā

Others were cases of transpositions of words,

maharṣeḥ pūjitasyeha sarvaloke mahātmanaḥ of the North against,

maharṣeḥ sarvalokeṣu pūjitasya mahātmanaḥ of the South (1.1.23)

vāmād ajāyatāṅguṣthād bhāryā tasya mahātmanah of the North against,

maharṣestasya bhāryā tu vāmāṅguṣṭhād ajāyata of the South (1.60.10)

Such differences do not alter the meaning of the stanza.

But there are a few cases where the different readings make a difference in meaning e.g. as regards the duration of Arjuna's *vanavāsa*, the Northern recension gives twelve years (*sa no dvādaśa varṣāṇi brahmacārī vane vaset*) as against twelve months of the Southern recension (*sa no dvādaśa vai māsān vratacāri vane vaset*, 1.204.28) Cconsequently, later, in 1.205.30 we have *vane dvādaśa varṣāṇi vāsāyopajagāma ha* in the Northern recension while the Southern one has *vane dvādaśa māsāni* (*māsānām*).

All doubtful passages including cases of the above type, whether they were parts of words, whole words or a string of words, are marked with a wavy line below the words.

(v) Emendation has played an extremely minor role in constituting the critical text. In the whole of the Ādiparvan, there are about thirty-five cases of emendation. Generally, they are concerned with single words and not longer passages and arise when the manuscripts reveal a tendency to avoid hiatus or to correct a hypermetrical line. All emendations are indicated by and asterisk mark (*). A few examples: (1) Avoiding a hiatus: when the manuscripts have variant readings like *pancakṛtvas tvayāsmy uktaḥ, or tvāyāty uktaḥ*, or *tvayāpy uktaḥ*, the text is emended as *pancakṛtvas tvayā * uktaḥ* (1.157.13); (2) A hypermetrical (9 syllables) is restored (eight syllables) by attempts like pratigṛhyatam *idānīm...*, or *pragṛhyatām idānīm me or pratigṛhyam idānīṁ *me* (1.30.7). In the Sabhāparvan, the editor has emended in stanza 2.28.49* antākhīm (for the readings *avarīm, āṭavīm, aṭavīm, and āṣṭavīm*) which he says stood Antioch by which possibly Alexandria was meant.

One aspect of editing the critical edition is determining the text of a stanza. This is what we have just examined. The second aspect is making a decision regarding the additional passages. On comparison of the different versions of both the recessions, it became quite clear that the text of the epic had additional passages indicative of numerous revisions it had undergone. It could happen that a writer of a manuscript straightaway incorporated an additional passage in his text which he had come to know from a different version or he could write it in margin. The knowledge of additional passages to manuscript writers could be accounted for as the result of public recitations of the epic at holy places of pilgrimage. If the writer of the manuscript found that passage rather long and could not be accommodated in the margin of a folio he wrote it on separate folios and inserted them at proper places with a remark *atra śodhepatram ekam.* The next writer would incorporate this additional matter in the margin or on separate folios in the body of his text and then it became the part of his text.

How does the editor decide whether a particular passage was an addition? Could it not be that the passage in question was original and was omitted in other versions? The answer to the question is given by the editors on the basis of their study of the manuscripts. They have come to the conclusion that if certain passages occur only in some versions and not in the others, then they are secondary additions in those which have them and not omissions in these which do not have them. Hence these additional passages, usually described as interpolations, were not accepted in the critical text but relegated to the footnotes if they were short ones, or in the Appendix if they were long ones. We are indeed, indebted to these transmitters of the Mahābhārata. They have, if need be, added to what was already known to them, but never dropped anything. Anything that is found in one recension, or less than a recension, for which there is nothing comparable in the other recension is looked upon as spurious.

The parvasaṁgraha as evidence

The second adhyāya of the Adiparvan is called the parvasaṁgraha parvan (1.2.33). It is a sort of the table of contents of the whole poem. It first lists the sub-parvans of each major parvan which, including the Harivaṃśa, make a total of hundred parvans (1.2.70), and immediately after that adds that the number of the major parvans is eighteen (*kathitaṁ naimiṣāraṇye parvāṇyaṣṭādaśaiva tu* 1.2.71). It then goes on to detail the main events of each major parvan and at the end of it mentions the number of adhyāyas and stanzas of that parvan, e.g. at the end of the enumeration of the events of the Ādiparvan it is stated that it has 213 adhyāyas and 7984 stanzas (1.2.95-96). It was once felt that this information would help immensely in constituting the critical text. On examination, however, it was found that there was no unanimity regarding the number of adhyāyas and stanzas in the different versions. Hence, the parvasaṁgraha figures could not be trusted as a guide in the preparation of the critical edition. Actually the Ādiparvan of the critical edition has 225 adhyāyas against the 218 of the parvasaṁgraha.

Achievements

Thursday, 22 September 1966, proved to be the red-letter day in the history of the Bhandarkar Institute. On that day Rashtrapati Dr. S. Radhakrishnan formally announced the publication of the Anuśāsanaparvan and, along with it, the completion of the critical edition of the Mahābhārata. In this endeavor the editors examined about 1300 manuscripts, used about 800 of them, and produced an edition extending to 13000 pages of demi quarto size and if we add to it the Harivaṃśa, another 2000 pages of the same size. This edition can be credited with the following important achievements:

(1) The critical edition presents as far as possible that text which can be established on the basis of the manuscript evidence. It is not a fiction, but a text which really once existed and from which all the manuscripts known to

us are directly descended. The critical edition has been able to establish that both the Northern and the Southern recensions are independent copies of an orally handed down single text.[6]

(2) The critical text is purer than any other printed text for it is free from obvious errors of copyists and on the other hand it has saved a number of authentic forms, solecisms which the transmitters of the text has tried to correct.

(3) Since the critical edition gives all the variant readings in the footnotes and all the additional passages either in the footnotes or in the Appendix, without omitting a single additional line, it is in a way a complete edition of the Mahābhārata manuscript tradition. By looking at the critical apparatus a reader can know haw a particular stanza appears in any version.

(4) While editing the Sabhāparvan, Prof. Edgerton came across a stanza (2.28.49) in which he found a city named Romā. He identified it with the famous city of Rome which turns out to be the first attestation of that city in our literature. He therefore concluded that the text of the critical edition could not be earlier than the 1st century B. C. and , very likely, not a century or two later than that. This is an important achievement of the critical text from the point of view of dating the text.

(5) One secondary achievement of the critical edition is that it has provided subjects for the Ph. D. dissertations to a number of students working in different universities. A couple of such examples are Dr. E. D. Kulkarni, 'Case Variation in the Mahābhārata', and Dr. K. Meenakshi, 'Epic syntax.'

(6) The critical edition is free from obvious interpolations which, as the manuscript evidence reveals, could not have been part of the original composition. Some of these additions are taken for granted for they have been

narrated by story-tellers for centuries together. A few instances of such interpolations are:

(i) One instance is from the Ādiparvan. It is generally believed that at the time of Draupadī's svayaṁvara when Karṇa got ready to pick up the bow and hit the target, Draupadī loudly proclaimed that she would not wed the son of a sūta. At this Karṇa threw down the bow and took his seat. This incident is widely ingrained in the minds of the people because Draupadī's declaration (*dṛṣṭva tu taṁ Draupadīvākyam uccair jagāda nāhaṁ vareyāmi sūtam*) occurs in the vulgate (three out of fourteen Devanāgarī manuscripts, besides the Nīlakaṇṭhī text) and also one (out of seven) Devanāgarī version allied to Kashmiri and one (out of three) Nepali manuscript. But it is absent in the Śāradā, Maithilī, and Bengali versions of the north and in all the three southern versions. It is therefore clear that the stanza regarding Draupadī's declaration is an interpolation. As such it does not find place in the critical text and is printed in the footnote (*1827, st.3, Ādiparvan, pp.725).[7]

(ii) A second instant may be cited from the Sabhāparvan. This refers to the celebrated prayer of Draupadī and Kṛṣna's supplying garments to her in the sabhā of the Kauravas. This incident is also taken for granted. It is mentioned many times in Kīrtans and bhajans in all Indian languages. The manuscripts evidence is totally against it. Hence the stanzas related to it are not admitted in the critical edition and are printed in the footnotes (*542-*552 on p.304). It has to be noted that the Kashmiri (Śāradā) version and the Nepali version do not have it at all. All other versions have stanzas describing the prayer and the help of Kṛṣṇa but there is no uniformity in the stanzas. The stanzas in the Northern and the Southern recensions are totally different from one another. It is therefore clear that the stanzas relating to the prayer in the two recensions do not originate from one common earlier source but are independent compositions and later additions made in the version of the two recensions. What the critical edition tells that is only Duḥśāsana started to drag forcibly Draupadī's upper garment[8] (stanza 2.61.40) and then straightaway goes on to say that when one upper garment was dragged another garment of same form appeared in its place many times (stanza 2.61.41). The critical edition does not say how this happened. It gives no explanation of the miracle of one garment replacing the other. Prof. Edgerton, the editor of the Sabhāparvan, observes: "no mention of Kṛṣṇa or any other superhuman agency... It is apparently implied (though not stated) that cosmic justice automatically, or "magically" if you like, prevented the chaste and noble Draupadī from being stripped in public" (Introduction to Sabhāparvan pp. xxviii-xxix).[9]

(iii) A third instance can be give from the Droṇaparvan. It is usually believed that in order to enable Arjuna to fulfill his vow to kill Jayadratha before sunset Kṛṣna covered the sun's disc with his Sudarśana cakra and produced the semblance of the nightfall. This belief is again based on certain stanza which, on manuscript evidence, are shown to be spurious. In the southern recension as a whole there are some stanzas (*1009. p.681) which inform us that Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna that he could employ some means to conceal the sun. There is no mention of the Sudarśana cakra in these stanzas. But, in addition to the above stanzas, the Telugu version and practically the whole of the Grantha version, but not the Malayalam version, contain seven lines (*1010, p 682) in which we are told that Kṛṣṇa remembered his cakra and when it appeared Kṛṣṇa told it to cover the sun and produce darkness. As for the northern recension, the Kashmiri version shows no knowledge of it. Only Bengali and Devanāgarī version (We do not have Nepali and Maithili manuscripts for this parvan) have just a passing reference to darkness produced by Kṛṣṇa (*1025, line1, pp. 686) (*tamasted vāsudevana saṁhṛtiṁ.../paścāj jñataṁ...tava putraḥ.../ vāsudeva-prayukteyaṁ māyeti*)[10]

Limitations

As will be clear from what has been said so far regarding the achievements of the critical edition that it is superior to any other edition of the Mahābhārata published any where in India. At the same time one has to bear in mind that the critical edition has certain limitations.

1. The first limitations is that the critical edition" is not anything like the autograph copy of the work of its mythical author, Maharṣi Vyāsa. It is also not an exact replica of the poem recited by Vaisampāyana before Janamejaya. It is further wholly uncertain how close it approaches the text of the poem said to be recited by the sūta (or Sauti) before Śaunaka and the other dwellers of the Naimiṣa forest" (V.S. Sukthankar, Prolegomena, p. c iii). The critical edition presents only that text which is as old as the extant manuscript evidence enables us to reach. The text cannot be accurately dated nor assigned to any locality or any one author. It gives us a text which really once existed and from which all manuscripts are directly descended (F. Edgerton, Sabhāparvan p. xxxvi).
2. The other limitation concerns the interpolations which persist in the critical edition itself. Under the 'Achievements' above were given instances of interpolations which have been already set aside on purely manuscripts evidence. Those interpolations must have arisen in comparatively recent times and hence did not find time enough to pervade all the versions.

There are, however, other passages which were composed at a very early date and hence found time to creep into all versions. Such additions involve internal contradictions in the epic. The oral transmitters or manuscript writes must have noticed the contradictions involved due to the additions they were making. They could have easily dropped one of the two passages to remove the contradiction. But it stands to the credit of the transmitters of the epic tradition that they took liberty to add to the text they had received[11], but on not account did they deliberately omit what they had received by tradition.[12]

The editors of the critical edition have already printed out some instances of such contradictions. But since such contradictory passages occur uniformly in all the versions of both the recensions the editors, in compliance with the principle they had accepted, had to give them place in the body of the critical text. They could not relegate them to the footnotes or to the appendices. They could not even indicate them by printing a wavy line because there was nothing doubtful about the text of these passages. They have, however, drawn attention of the readers to such contradictions in their Introductions to the parvans edited by them, without saying which one of the two passages was the ' original' and which the 'addition'. That, according to them, would mean going beyond the scope of the present editors. All decisions in such cases as well as in those where the internal contradictions are not so obvious will be the task of later researchers who will have to take recourse to 'higher criticism'[13]

A few examples of obvious contradictions or an oddity in the critically edited text may be presented below:

(i) One example of such contradiction is related to the question whether Mādrī did, or did not, commit satī after the death of Pāṇḍu. In the first instance we are told that after the death of Pāṇḍu, Mādrī mounted the funeral pyre and confined herself to flames (1.116.31; also 1.117.28). With this stanza ends the adhyāya 116. And immediately after that in the following adhyāya 117 we are told that the sages who went to Hastināpura taking with them Kuntī and five young Pāṇḍavas also brought with them the dead bodies of Pāṇḍu and Mādrī and handed them over to Bhīṣma. They further asked Bhīṣma to perform funeral rites on the two bodies (1.117.29.-31). We then read in the next adhyāya 118 an elaborate description of the funeral rites. We are told that when Pāṇḍu's body was covered with white clothes he looked as if he was alive! All this clearly means that Pāṇḍu's body was not confined to flames and Mādrī did not commit satī. The two accounts so contradict each other that only one of them can be true and original and the other one must be a late addition. In spite of the contradiction involved in the two consecutive adhyāyas, the editor of the Ādiparvan had no option but to admit them in the critical text since both the accounts are uniformly found in all the eight versions of the epic. However, if we examine the epic evidence closely we can say that the account which tells us that Mādrī did not commit sati has better chances to be the original one. In the first instance, we note that the custom of sati is not attested in the whole of the Vedic literature. The Gṛhyasūtras and the early Smṛti texts do not prescribe it. Thirdly, no other woman of the Kuru family is reported in the epic to have committed satī. We also have external evidence to support this view. The Greek historian Diodorus (1st century B.C.) reports an incident which occurred in Iran in 316 B.C. An Indian soldier in the Greek army was killed in the battle. He had taken with him his two wives. After the soldier's death both the wives wanted commit satī. The matter was therefore referred to the Greek general of the army.

He decided that the younger wife may commit satī and not the elder one. The similarity between this incident and the one related to Pāṇḍu are so striking that one is inclined to conclude that the account of Mādrī's going satī was invented after the above incident of fourth century BC became known in India.

(ii) Examples of internal contradiction in the critical edition are found in passages which are not so close to each other. It is related to the two reports of the Mahābhārata war. One is given by Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra in Hastināpur in four installments, viz. those (1) after the fall of Bhīṣma, (2) death of Droṇa and (3) Karṇa, and (4) after the nocturnal massacre in the camp of the Pāṇḍavas, and the other very short one (only two adhyāyas 14.59-60), given by Kṛṣṇa to his father Vasudeva in Dvārakā. The report by Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra which is found in five whole parvans (6-10) is well known. The other by Kṛṣṇa to Vasudeva is not so well known.

When Kṛṣṇa returned to Dvārakā after the war, Vasudeva told him that he had heard about the great war on various occasions from several persons. But since Kṛṣṇa was an eye-witness to it (*pratyakṣadarśī*), he (Vasudeva) would like to know from him what exactly had happened in the war (*yāthātathyena* 14.59.2). In his extremely brief report (*samāsenaiva* 14.59.7) Kṛṣṇa makes statements which give some additional information not given by Sañjaya, omits various important events and, worse still, contradicts the earlier information of Sañjaya. He, for instance, informs Vasudeva, that at the end of the first ten days of war when Bhīṣma fell, the army of the Kauravas was reduced to nine akṣauhinis and of the Pāṇḍavas to five; after the death of Droṇa the respective armies were reduced to five and three, and after the death of Karṇa to three and one (14.49.14, 16, 19-20, 22-23). These details are not found in Sañjaya's report.

While it is true that Kṛṣṇa's report was intended to be brief, he was not expected to omit the trying conditions under which Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Karṇa, and Duryodhana one were put out of action. These were very import details. And finally, Kṛṣṇa contradicts Sañjaya. According to Kṛṣṇa, we are led to believe that just as the Kauravas had four generals[14], Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and Śalya-, the Pāṇḍavas too had four generals Śikhaṇḍīn, Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira (14.59.9, 15,20,23). But according to Sañjaya, the Pāṇḍavas had only one general viz. Dhṛṣṭadyumna throughout the war. It is true that the other three mentioned by Kṛṣṇa were directly responsible for the fall of Bhīṣma, Karṇa and Śalya, but they were not anointed leaders of the Pāṇḍavas army. Similarly while reporting the fall of Bhīṣma, Kṛṣṇa says that Śikhaṇḍī, along with Arjuna, strück Bhīṣma who was not fighting (*tataḥ Śikhaṇḍī gāṅgeyam ayudhyantam... /jaghāna bahubhir bāṇaiḥ* 14.59.11). This is not quite true. Bhīṣma did not fight only with Śikhaṇḍī. With the rest he did fight. It was not Bhīṣma but Droṇa who had laid down his arms. But Kṛṣṇa does not tell that. He says that the tired Droṇa succumbed to Dhṛṣṭadyumna (*tato droṇaḥ pariśrānto dhṛṣṭadyumnavaśaṁ gataḥ* 14.59.18). He makes no reference to Karṇa's wheel getting stuck into an earthern crevice, nor to the cakravyūha when narrating Abhimanyu's death. These details, unavoidable in any short account, are passed over by Kṛṣṇa as if they never occurred. The two reports are so incompatible with each other that there can be no doubt that they refer to two somewhat varying narrations of the war. Yet the two find place in the critical editions since they are attested in both the recensions.

(iii) As an instance of oddity, one may recall the two identical beginnings of the Mahābhārata. The first adhyāya of the Ādiparvan begins with a prose line which informs us that sūta Ugraśravas, son of Lomaharṣana once (arrived) in the Naimiṣa forest where a twelve-year long satre of Kulapati Śaunaka was in progress (*Lomaharṣaṇaputra ugraśravāḥ sūtah paurājiko naimiṣāraṇye śaunakasya kulapater dvādaśavārṣike satrē* 1.1.1). The prose line has no verb and is incomplete. It gets competed when it is combined with the following stanza which has a verb. The stanza tells us that Ugraśravas politely approached the Brahmarṣis of strict vows who has assembled there (for the *satra*) (*samāsīnān abhyagacchad brahmarṣīn saṁśitavratān/ vinayavānato bhūtvā kadācit sūtanandanaḥ* 1.1.2)

On reading these lines one has the feeling that the epic poem has begun here. But that is not true. After this adhyāya there follow two more long adhyāyas and then the forth short (11 stanzas) adhyāya which begins exactly as the first adhyāya with a sentence complete in itself: *Lomeharṣaṇaputra ugraśravāḥ sūtaḥ paurāṇiko naimiṣāraṇye śaunakasya kulapater dvādasa vārṣike satre ṛṣin abhyāgatān upatasthe* (1.4.1). Then follow some prose lines and afterwards some stanzas. Now it is quite clear that no author would have two such identical beginnings. One of the two adhyāyas must be looked upon as an interpolation. The editor has noted the oddity. But he had to give both of them place in his critical text because both are found in all manuscript used by him.[15]

(iv) One more example of an interpolation which is not very obvious may be cited. It pertains to the famous vow of Bhīma to break the thigh of Duryodhana. The incident is too well known to require any description.[16] When one goes through the detailed description of the war lasting for eighteen days in which Duryodhana fought quite a number of duels. One is surprised to note that no one of the fighting warriors, not even

Bhīma and Duryodhana, show any awareness of the vow. All along in the war Duryodhana is shown fighting with his bow and arrows and not with the mace. We may keep aside Duryodhana's other duels, but I wish to bring to your notice tow occasions when Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to kill Duryodhana by cutting off his head (7.77.7 and 9.26.9, 24). On both occasions Duryodhana escaped death for one reason or the other; but if Arjuna had succeeded in cutting off Duryodhana's head, how could Bhīma have fulfilled his vow which was his bounden duty as a Kṣatriya? Obviously Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were unaware of the vow. Again, when Yudhiṣṭhira challenges Duryodhana for a duel he says that Duryodhana may fight with any one of the Pāṇḍavas. If Bhīma had taken the vow, how could Yudhisthira give him this choice? He should have told him to fight with Bhīma so that Bhīma could fulfill his vow. Yudhiṣṭhira too thus shows no awareness of the vow.

Finally, when Bhīma and Duryodhana start their duel with the mace, it may be noted that fighting with a mace was Duryodhana's choice, not of Bhīma – none of the two fighters shows any awareness of the vow. Bhīma was fighting with his opponent strictly according to the rules of the mace-duel. It was only when Bhīma became vulnerable because his armour was broken that Kṛṣṇa suggested to Arjuna that Bhīma must adopt some unfair means if he was to come out alive. Otherwise he was sure to be killed. Arjuna then struck his thigh with his hand[17] (9.57.3-19), Bhīma understood the hint, threw his mace to hit Duryodhana's thighs and the duel ended. One final point to be noted is that to avoid the hit of the mace Duryodhana jumped up in the sky. If he had any awareness of the vow, would he do that and lay bare his thighs? On top of all this, Bhīma himself admits to Gāndhārī that he broke the rules of the duel and hit Duryodhana's thighs because be had no other option.

Anything else would have surely meant his own death (11.14.1-6).[18]

Notes

1. For most of the information contained in the first three sections of this paper I am indebted to Dr. V. S. Sukthankar's Prolegomena to his edition of the Ādiparvan. Page numbers given in this paper are following those in the Prolegomena.
2. "Druckprobe einer kritisehen Ausgabe des Mahābhārata", Leipzig, 1908. It was meant only for private circulation. Prof. Winternitz had sent a copy of it to Dr. V. S. Sukthankar which he returned to him after inspection. Unfortunately the B. O. R. I. does not have a copy of it.
3. The parvan to be published last was the thirteenth Anuśāsanaparvan. The preceding four parvans (14-18) were published before that. The Harivaṃśa, a supplement of the Mahābhārata appeared in two parts in 1969 and 1971.
4. In the case of the Mahābhārata, it is not possible to say how many manuscripts of the text exist. Dr. Sukthankar says that he knew of 235 manuscripts of the Ādiparvan. Only about 60 out of these were used for collation.
5. The earliest Nepali palm leaf manuscript of the 12th century was not available in the stages of the Critical Edition, and even if that was available it would not have served the purposes since it was incomplete. The notice of this manuscript, which is not dated but which, as palaeographic grounds show, can be assigned to the 12th century, was given by Sukthankar.
6. Sabhāparvan, Introduction p. xxxvi
7. It is also well to remember that a stanza which occurs in all the versions and hence finds place in the critical text mentions Karṇa among those king who tried their hand at the bow but failed (*Yat Karṇaśalyapramukhaiḥ . . . nānataṃ balavadbhir dhanuḥ*) 1.179./4. The Critical Edition, since it omits the stanza in question put in Draupadī's mouth, is free from this contradiction.
8. In my opinion in this contest the word vasana has to be understood as 'upper garment' and not as 'lower garment' as is commonly believed. For details see my paper "Draupadī's Garments" in H. C. Bhayani Felicitation Volume, pp. 157-168.
9. Perhaps, the clue to the miracle is given by a stanza in the Northern recension which mentions the agency of dharma,

besides of course Kṛṣṇa, which supplied the garments. The stanza (*544) says: *tatas tu dharmo' ntarito mahātmā samāvṛnot tāṁ vividha-vastrapūgaḥ*). From this one may say that in the 'original' narration Draupadī in her difficult situation performed *satyakriyā* and invoked her *pativratādharma* to help her. The dharma of the stanza is to be understood as *pativratādharma*. The idea of Kṛṣṇa helping Draupadī seems to have arisen later in the south. When it spread to the north, the stanzas of the southern version were not borrowed but more detailed description was composed. The original concept of dharma was then only incidentally mentioned as in the stanza (*344) noted down. For details see my paper on 'Draupadī's garment' referred to above.

10. Not only that we do not have these stanzas in the Northern recension, the critical edition informs us that after Jayadratha's death fierce fighting continued for sometime. This mean that there was broad daylight for some time even after Jayadratha's fall and hence there was no reason for Kṛṣṇa to play some trick.
11. I have shown that the Mahābhārata itself calls upon the narrators of the epic to make additions and make the poem larger. It asks them to make the *upabṛṁhaṇa* 'enlargement' of the Veda composed by Kṛṣṇa (Dvaipāyana) by adding to it Itihāsas and Purāṇas (*itihāsapurāṇābyāṁ vedaṁ samupabṛṁhayet*, 1.1. 204) on interpretation of this passage, see my paper published in 'Understanding the Vedas' pp. 149-152, Vaidiki Samsodhana Mandala, Pune, 411037 (2006)
12. F. Edergton, Sabhāparvan p. xxxiv.
13. "To try to make the text consistent on such points would be to enter the realm of higher criticism" F. Edgerton, Sabhāparvan, p. xxxiii.
14. Aśvatthāman was consecrated as the fifth general of the Kaurava army by Duryodhana (*9, 64.36-40). He was supposed to lead the remaining Kaurava army, which would have included Kṛpa, Kṛtavaman and Duryodhana, next day against Pāṇḍavas. Aśvatthāman, however, chose to destroy the Pāṇḍava army that very night.
15. An equally odd and also comic incident is reported in the Bhīṣmaparvan (6.41). Just before the war, Yudhiṣṭhira is said to have approached Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and Śalya to receive their blessings and ask the first two how they could be killed in war. Such and incident is impossible in any earnest battle, it is no doubt an interpolation.

16. The incident which is supposed to have driven Bhīma to take the vow is misunderstood. The stanza (2.63.12), in my opinion has been completely misunderstood. The stanza does not say that Duryodhana bared his thigh to show it to Draupadī. It tells us that he showed it to Karṇa and Bhīma inspite of the presence of Draupadī in the Sabhā.
17. The two stanzas (9.57.6-7) in Kṛṣṇa's speech which make a mention of the vow are obviously an interpolation. If the vow really existed, there was no necessity of Kṛṣṇa's trying to justify his suggestion to adopt an unfair measure to kill Duryodhana
18. For a detailed treatment of this subject see my paper on 'Ūrubhaṅga and Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata' *JASB,* NS 73.91-97; reprinted in Collected Papers of M. A. Mehendale, 'Madhuvidyā', pp. 526-532. For Bhīma's second vow to drink Duḥśāsana's blood being also an interpolation, see my paper 'Did Bhīma vow to drink Duḥśāsana's blood?', *BORI*, Vn. 86.93-97, 2006.

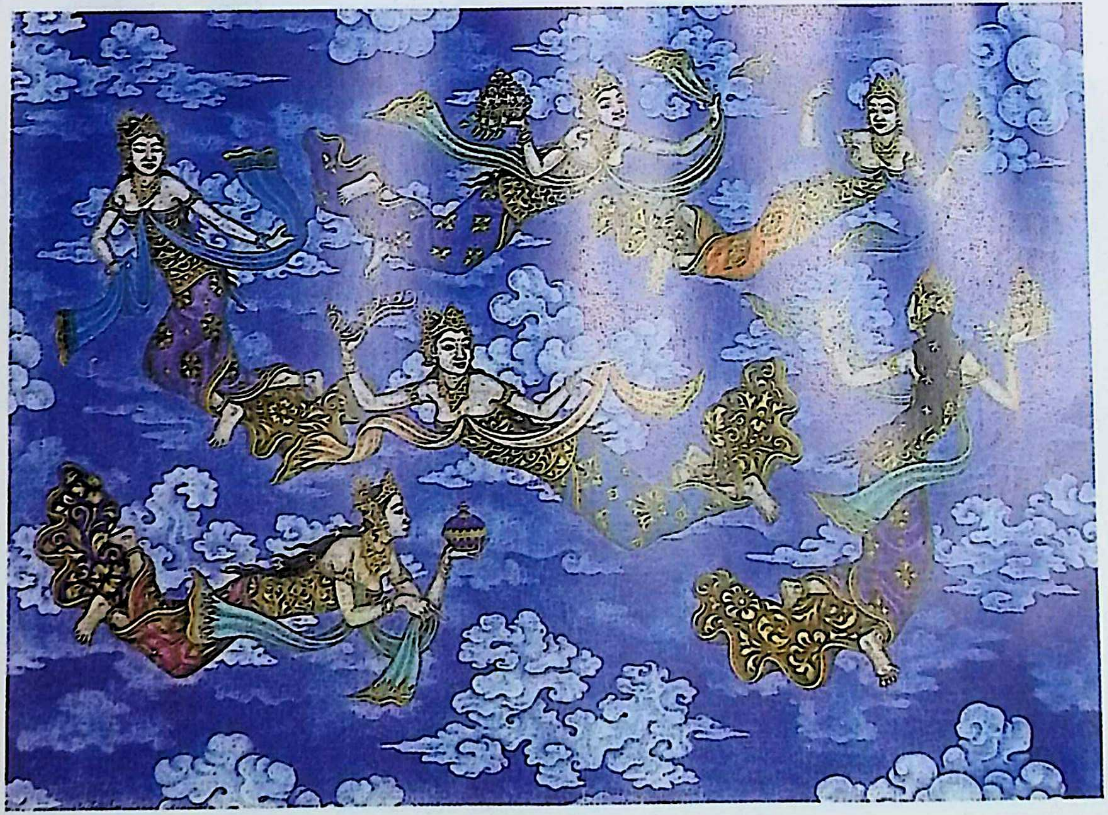

Plate 5. Goddesses (*apsaras*) flying in the heaven of Indra
Artist: I Wayan Tarun, Bali (Indonesia)

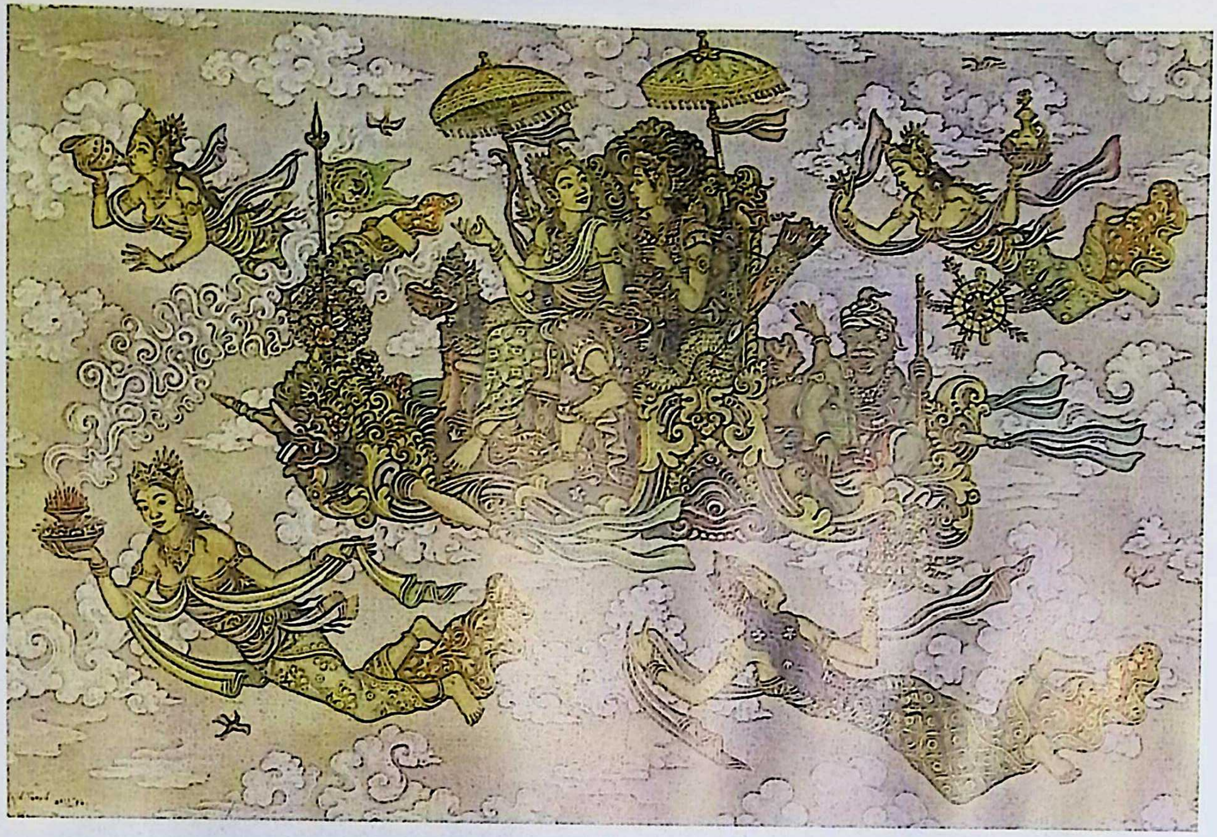

Plate 6. Arjuna and Subhadrā on a flying chariot surrounded by the few Goddesses of conch(śaṅkha), holy water (toya tīrtha), incense (dhūpa), offerring (*naivedya*).

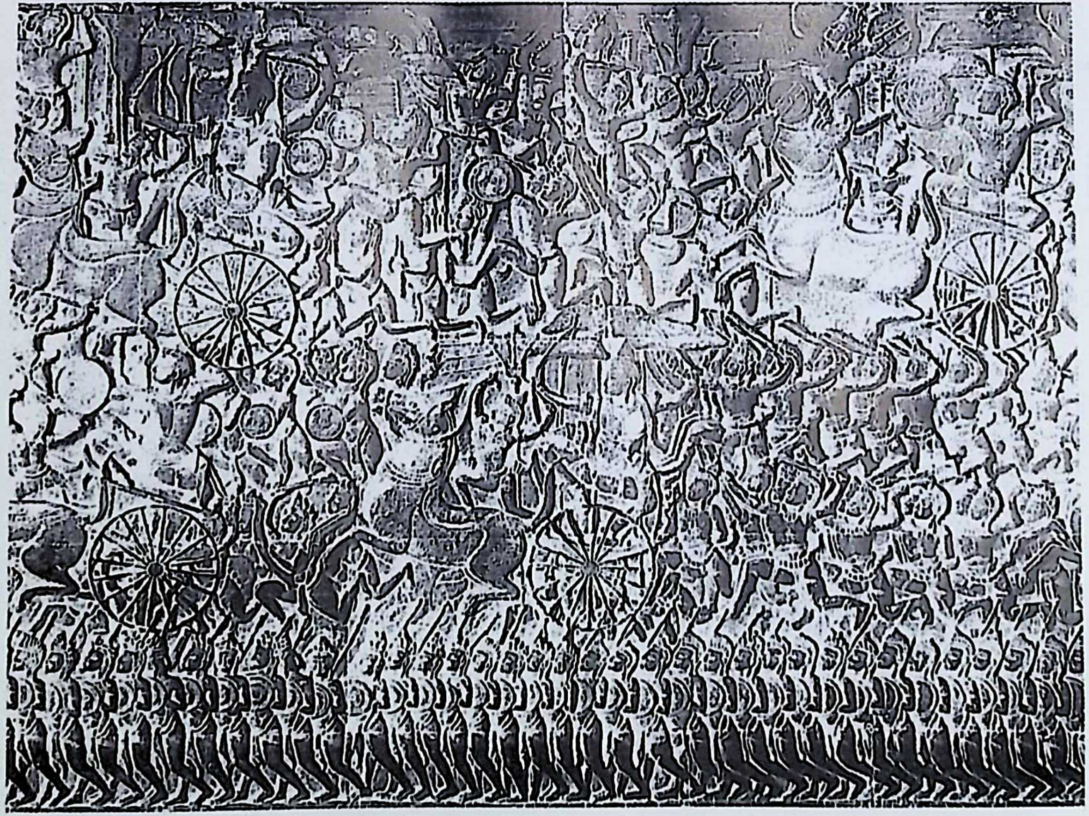

Plate 7. The Pāṇḍava army moving to the battlefield.

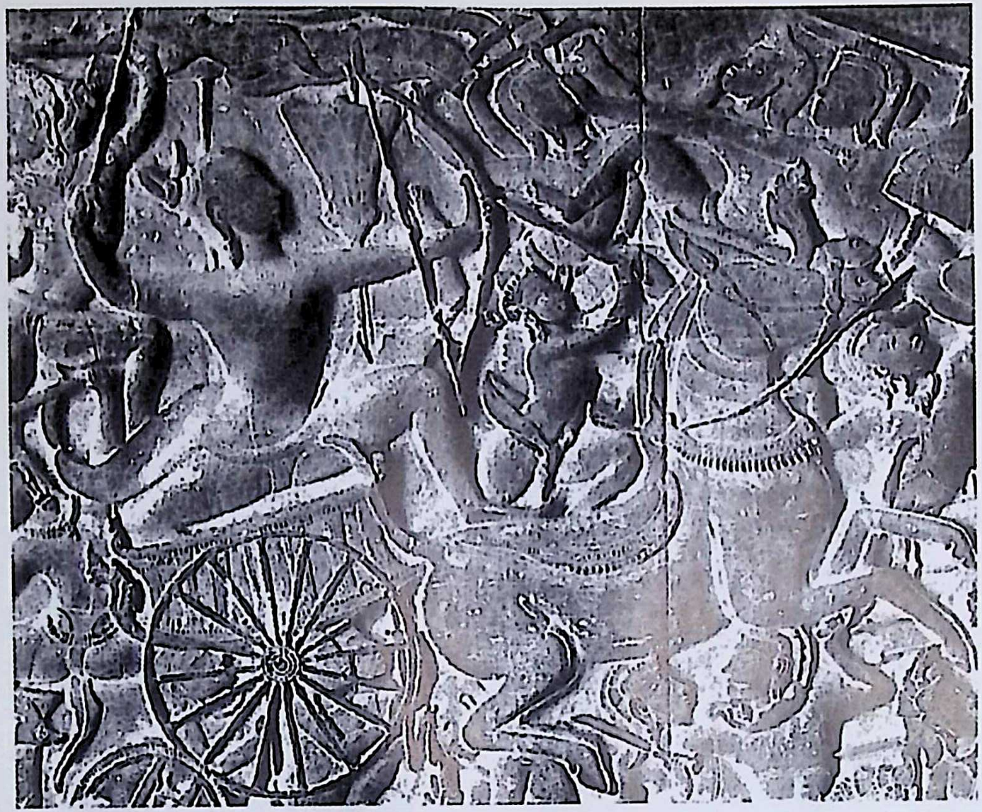

Plate 8. Droṇa, teacher of the military arts.

2

The Mahābhārata in Asian Literature and Arts

Lokesh Chandra

The Mahābhārata, an epic of poetic flight and words of imperative sway, has evoked the subtlety and richness of the soul of Asia. It has been the meaning hidden in minds, whether of India or of other climes enriched with her spirit. Centuries have listened to constant drone, the gabbling, stumbling and scrambling in the repetition of the holy words of the Bhārata in the shrines and sanctuaries, temples and palaces of South East Asia. It has been a living existence. The Bhārata was a living organism, wherein voices, horizons, piety and illumination mingled.

Mahābhārata in Kampuchean Inscriptions

As early as the sixth century, the Veal Kantal Inscription (K 359) relates that Brāhmaṇa Somaśarman offered to Lord Tribhuvaneśvara a complete copy of the Bhārata and arranged its unbroken daily recitation (*aśeṣaṃbhārataṃ dadat/ akṛtānvaham acchedyam sa ca tad-vācana-sthitim//*). Another inscription of Prasat Parh That (K 109) of the mid seventh century says that the Sambhavādhaya of the Ādiparvan was donated by Bhavajñāna to a temple (Sarkar 1968:29). Imprecations are invoked against one who destroys this manuscript deposited in the temple. The Parast Kandol

Dom Inscription (K 809) of the ninth century says that Śivasoma, the royal preceptor of King Indravarman (AD 877-889) was an expert in the Bhārata and other treatises (Sarkar 1968:35). The stele of the foundation of Pre Rup, dated Śaka 883, speaks of the installation of Bhārata-saṃhitā (Coedes 1937:2.102). The stele of Prasat Trapan Run (K 598), dated Śaka 928, informs us that the teaching of the full Bhārata was in vogue. The Prasat Barmei Stele (K 744), placed in the 10th century, furnishes evidence of the recitation of the Bhārata. The Prasat Sankhah Inscription (K 218) mentions the teaching of the Bhārata, along with the Purāṇas and the Rāmāyaṇa. The Prasat Khna Inscription (K 661) says that King Suryavarman I was fond of sacred narrations from the Bhārata and others *(bharatādi-kathā-rataḥ)*.

Mahābhārata in the Plastic Arts of Kampuchea

The exquisite temple of Banteai Seri, or 'Women's Citadel', formed in Īśvarapura in ancient times and was dedicated to Śiva. It belonged to the second half of the tenth century, when classical Khmer art was beginning to come into full bloom. Its pediments have been superbly executed in balanced rhythm and harmony. One of these pediments depicts an episode from the Mahābhārata wherein apsarā Tilottamā stands between Bhīma and Duryodhana (May 1954:128-9).

Episodes from the Mahābhārata provided scenes to embellish the Baphuon too. Its tympans relate incidents from the great Epic. The vivid skill of the craftsmen enact events with gusto. The pyramid temple was constructed around A.D. 1050-66, and became the grandeur of Yaśodharapura. Its shining copper-coloured towers are mentioned by Chou Ta-kuan. The episodes of both the epics of Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata were carved on individual panel with superb craftsmanship which was never excelled. The Baphuon is a significant milestone to Angkor Wat, the supreme masterpiece of Khmer art, unequalled in spaciousness and splendor, and built in enduring strength.

Angkor was constructed in the twelfth century by Sūryavarman II, a mighty military leader whose sway extended to the South China Sea in the east, to Champa (South Vietnam) and Bay of Bandon (Malaya) in the south, to the Pagan kingdom in the west. The long wall spaces of the outer galleries of Angkor bear narrative bas-reliefs from the stories of Viṣṇu, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The southern section of the west wall of the outer gallery has scenes where Viṣṇu, incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, aids the Pāṇḍavas. They vibrate with the martial strength of the twelfth century imperial forces. The fight between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas covers forty-nine meters: the longest bas-relief of the Mahābhārata in the world. They have a freedom of movement that transmits vigorous dynamism to the whole.

Mahābhārata in the Kabuki theatre of Japan

The well-known Kabuki drama "Narukami" is derived from the legend of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, known in Japanese as Ikkaku Sennin or Ekaśṛṅga. This episode is derived from the Mahābhārata (3.110.23-113) and has been conveyed to Japan through the Kyoritsuiso or Ching-lu-i-hsiang, an anthology of different themes from the sūtras and vinaya works. It was compiled by Seng-min and Pao-ch'ang inAD 516 under the Liang dynasty. It has avadānas of heaven, earth, Buddha, Bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, cakravartins, kings and queens, princes and merchants, ṛṣis and brahmcārins, brāhmaṇas and gṛhapatis, common men and women, gods and demons, beasts, birds, insects and hells. The sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga has never seen a woman and is seduced at first sight by princess, the daughter of king Lomapāda. The whole legend has been translated from Chinese into French by Edouard Chavannes in *Cinq Cents Contes et Apologues* (3.233ff no.453). The legend of the Ṛṣi Ekaśṛṅga (Unicorn) reached Medieval Europe (Beal, *Romantic Legend of Buddha,* p.124 no.2). Hsuan-tsang mentions a hermitage in Gandhāra where Ekaśṛṅga lived near the foothills of Swat mountains. Ṛṣi Ekaśṛṅga appears in Japanese and Tibetan masks employed in theatrical representations (B. Laufer, *Prolegomena on the History of Defensive Armor,* pl. XI). Ekaśṛṅga figures in Chinese clay figures.

The Mahābhārata has been the epic halo of the Hindu-Buddhist mind, poetic, melancholy, ancient and vibrant. It has lorded over our conscience for centuries. So pervasive has been its grip, that it has continued its journey even into Chinese texts that reflect the Buddhist spirit. In A.D. 251 the Sogdian monk K'ang Seng-hui translated a collection of tales on the six pāramitās (Nj.143, K206) which reflects the birth of the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Levi 1934:98). In the same year K'ang Seng-hui translated an old collection of avadānas (Nj.1359, K1005) entitled Chin tsa p'i yu ching whose description of a sumptuous magic mansion parallels the Mahābhārata 2.47 (Levi 1934:139). The legend of birds who took off with the net of the bird-catcher reminds of the Udyogaparvan 2455-63 (Levi 1934:154). In A.D. 472 Kekaya and T'ang-yao translated 121 avadānas or tales under the Chinese title *Tsa pao tsang ching* (Nj. 1329, K1001). Its tale of an old brāhmaṇa who questioned cheats has parallels in the Mahābhārata 2.41.30-41 (Levi 1934:222). The story of 'man in the will' in the sixth century anthology of tales *Ching lu i hsiang* by Seng-min and Pao-ch'ang (K 1050) is found in the Mahābhārata 11 (Levi 1934:235).

Mahābhārata in Mongolia

A Mongolian resume of the Mahābhārata is included in the commentary of the *Subhāṣita-ratna-nidhi* entitled *Subhashidi-yin tayilburi cindamani-yin tulkigur kemegdeku* (Mukden ed. p.220 et seq.). This work was translated in A.D. 1778-9 by Blo-bzan-tshul-khrims, the doctor from the Cayan ayula-yin sume or White Mountain Monastery in the Chaqar province, from the Tibetan original of Sa-skya pandita. The Mongolian commentary which contains the epic is a revised version of the Tibetan commentary of Rin-chen-dpal-bzan-po. It has remained a very popular work among the Mongols as a model of literary vehicle for transmitting the classical stories and epic of India to the remote regions of Northern Asia inhabited by Mongolian-speaking people.

Mahābhārata legends in Thailand

The influence of the Mahābhārata is to be seen in the moralizing story *Krishna Son Nong* written by Prince Paramanujit (1790-1853), which is taken directly from the Vanaparvan. Two classical Thai works deal with the narrative of Aniruddha, the *Aniruth* from the time of King Phra Narai, and the *Unaruth* which was written in 1783. The hero of these stories is the son of Pradyumna and the grandson of Kṛṣṇa. During a hunt, he carries away a Tree-spirit Princess Usa (Uṣā), daughter of the mighty demon Phan (Bāṇāsura). In the end Aniruddha and Uṣā are united in wedlock by the aid of Kṛṣṇa (Boisselier 1976:196).

Mahābhārata in Indonesia

Now we pass on to Indonesia, where the Mahābhārata has matured into a prime cultural phenomenon which has no counterpart even in India. Its expression in the performing arts, in *wayang*, reached such a high level of sophistication that audiences are moved to tears, and why not. It is a divine creation: the story of Murvakala relates how the *wayang kulit* and its accompanying gamelan were created by Batara Guru, that is, Lord Śiva.

In Indonesia, the Mahābhārata has been most vibrant in literature as well as in the performing arts. Known in these isles as the Aṣṭadasaparvan and in a shortened from as parvan, it has continued to excite the creative talent of the people. The introductory *maṅgalācāraṅa* of the Old Javanese Ādiparvan, in vasantatilaka metre, recounts the names of the eighteen parvans. Eight parvans are extant in Old Javanese prose adaptations, with Sanskrit quotations scattered throughout the narrative. They constitute the belles-lettres of ancient Indonesia and to this day parvans continue to be adapted for children's comics.

The following parvans are available in Old Javanese: Ādiparvan, Virāṭaparvan, Udyogaparvan, Bhīṣmaparvan, Āśramavāsaparvan, Mosala-parvan, Prāsthānikaparvan, Svargārohaṇaparvan. The last parvan ends with a lengthy epilogue on the holiness of the Mahābhārata and the fruits that accrue from its reading. The Indonesian adapters have kept close to Vyāsa or as said in the Old Javanese Virāṭaparvan: *mangjavaken Byasamata.* Instead of mechanical translation, they have produced works of literary merit, without what they term *kavi-līlā-lalanā* or the "playful liberties of the poet". Simple and lucid, they tell the story vividly and with fluency. Sanskrit quotations abound to enhance the authenticity and gravity of the text. The Indonesian parvans do not seem to conform to one or the other Indian recensions of the Epic.The Indonesian Virāṭaparvan is a unique instance of an exact date of its first recital, one could say the premiere, of an old Javanese text. Its recitation continued from 14 October to 12 November 996. Some parvans were written under the patronage of King Śrī Dharmmavaṃśa Teguh Ananatavikramottuṅgadeva. The last four parvans are short and give the impression of being more recent. They are the works of different authors. The Ādiparvan and Virāṭaparvan have provided the *wayang pūrva* stories, while the Udogāparvan and Bhīṣmaparvan are the source of the *Bhāratayuddha.* Mpu Kāṇva's Arjuna-vivāha is derived from the Vanaparvan (adhyāya 37ff). It marks the beginning of East Javanese Kakavin literature and at the same time shines out as the best both in composition and style. Simplicity and naturalness are its virtuosity. The poem was written under the patronage of King Erlaṅga, probably between A.D. 1028 and 1035.

In the Harivaṁśaparvan, the *maṅgala* is addressed to Viṣṇu incarnated as Kṛṣṇa and King Jayābhaya. The *Bhāratayuddha* is also addressed to King Jayābhaya. When Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas have gone to heaven, the Kali age comes, and Viṣṇu incarnates in His Majesty Jayābhaya who restores peace in Java. It is a clear statement that the Mahābhārata was an integral element in the concept of the State in Indonesia and Indonesian Kings considered themselves to be incarnations of the heroes of the Mahābhārata. The opening *maṅgala* verse of the Ghaṭotkacaśraya is addressed to King Jayakṛta as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The epilogue is by Mpu Panuluh. In the *Bhāratayuddha* the *maṅgala* verses eulogise:

"the hero, who devotes himself fully to the performance of his sacrifice on the battle-field, desiring the extirpation of all adverse powers. With perfect composure he uses as flower-offerings the head-ornaments from the hair of his enemies who have fallen in battle. The forehead ornaments of the deceased kings are his rice-grains; his sacrificial fire is the blazing fires of the palaces of his adversaries. His defeated adversaries acknowledge him as their king. Therefore the whole world honours him with the name Bhātara Jayābhaya. Śiva, surrounded by gods and ṛṣis, descends from heaven to grant him a favour. He shall be the ruler of the world, vanquisher of foes *(jayaśatru)* and one with him (Śiva) in being."

In Indonesian the parvans were the symbol of active power of victory, of vanquishment of enemies, and of the manifestation of the Absolute in the person of the king. The Bhārata was also called Jaya *(tato Jayam udīrayet)*. That is why Mpu Sĕḍah praised the King as the favourite of Śiva in the introduction of his *Bhāratayuddha* and Mpu Panuluh the author of the latter part of the Kakavin celebrated him as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The text is explicit that it was the king himself who ordered the enunciation of his heroic feats in his pre-incarnation as Kṛṣṇa. The King Jayakṛta celebrated in the third stanza of the *Ghaṭotkacaśraya* as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa can be Śṛṅga-Kṛtajaya who ruled at the end of thirteenth century. The three kāvyas follow in general the story of the epic, particularly the *Bhāratayuddha*. It commences with the preparations for the great war (Udyogaparvan, adhāyaya 89 onwards) and ends with the massacre of the Pāṇḍava heroes in the Sauptikaparvan. The essential structure remains intact and drastic cutting of details and digressions puts in sharp relief the dramatic high points. Deviations occur, their sources await investigation. Popular inventions, confusions and fusions cannot be ruled out when an epic comes alive, and when it conditions and creates the inner dynamics of life. The horizon of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata is the individuality and wholeness of India and a deep commitment to her ideals and institutions. Wherever was the Epic treaded, it became the vehicle of integration, unifying impulses, vital kinship and ennobling experiences, awakening men to shared harmonies.

There are a number of Kakavins or kāvyas in Old Javanese with Kṛṣṇa as the central figure. Pnauluh's *Harivaṃśa* is the first of them. Its first part gives the genealogy of Kṛṣṇa's ancestors and the second pertains to the abduction of Rukmiṇī. Kṛṣṇa's abduction of Rukmiṇī was the most popular theme in ancient Indonesia. It is the subject of another kakavin, namely the *Kṛṣṇayāna* by Mpu Triguna. The *Kṛṣṇayāna* is depicted in a series of reliefs on the second terrace of the Panataran temple in East Java. The theme of *Harivaṃśa* and *Kṛṣṇayāna* is the same, namely, the war concomitant to the abduction of Rukmiṇī when about to be married to the King of Cedī. The *Kṛṣṇayāna* is closer to Indian sources, and the *Harivaṃśa* is freer, more original and livelier in its characterisation. The independence of the Ghaṭotkacaśraya is striking. Its story centres around Kṛṣṇa's daughter Kṣitisundarī, who is unknown in the Indian Mahābhārata and Purāṇas.

Tanakung is the last poet of the last century of the Majapahit empire. His *Pārthayāna* relates Arjuna's journey to Mount Indrakīla, when the five Pāṇḍava brothers are in utter dejection after Yudhiṣṭhira has lost everything in the dice-game and Draupadī has suffered the most humiliating insults. It is a blowup of a short incident in the life of the Pāṇḍavas into a full-length didactic-mystical Kakavin. It is represented in the plastic arts as reliefs on Candi Jago, a temple dedicated to Viṣṇuvardhana who died in 1268.

Among the post-Majapahit Kakavins, we may mention the *Subhadrā-vivāha* or *Pārthayāna* 'Arjuna's wanderings'. It recounts Arjuna's adventures in his journey to holy places. It agrees with the OJ. Ādiparvan. A few pages (pp.197-204 of Juynboll's edition) have grown into a Kakavin of fifty-five cantos. At the end of twelve years Arjuna returns to his relations in Indraprastha, with Subhadrā. It is a work of the end of the fifteenth century.

The *Abhimanyu-vivāha* is close adaptation of the Virāṭa-parvan in verse. To adhere to the norms of a Kakavin, the poet has added descriptive passages and the poem ends with a long passage on the wedding. This gives it the name. Another episode from the Ādiparvan provided the subject of the *Harivijaya.* Kṛṣṇa is the central figure in the Kṛṣṇa-vijaya or *Kālayavanāntaka, Kālāntaka* or *Kṛṣṇakālāntaka, Kṛṣṇāntaka* "Kṛṣṇa's Death", and *Kṛṣṇāndhaka* or *Kaṃsa.* Several minor Kakavins have derived their subject- matter from the parvans, e.g. Āstikaśraya, Āstikayāna (Āstika's adventures), Ḍimbī-vicitra, Ratna-vijaya (the story of demons Sunda and Upasunda) from the Ādiparvan. Indravijaya and Ambāśraya go back to the Udyogaparvan. Stories from the seven Old Javanese parvans featured as full- length Kakavins, the Svargārohaṇa-parvan is an exception. There is no Kakavin from any other parvan of the Mahābhārata. Thus there is no possibility of the remaining ten parvans of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata having existed in Old Javanese prose versions. Later Kakavins show marked deviations from the Mahābhārata: e.g. *Dharmakusuma* and *Surāntaka* diverge from their source the Vanaparvan Mahābhārata. The parvans remained vigorously creative and prolific for as the Koravaśrama says:

"without the Pāṇḍavas and the Koravas there is no order or law in the world" (Zoetmulder 1974:437).

Jasadipura I and Jasadipura II have rendered the *Bhāratayuddha* into Modern Javanese in tembang macapat metre. The former was the Court Poet of Paku Buvono III (1749-1788). In Indonesia the Mahābhārata was more popular than the Rāmāyaṇa, as it was an inexhaustible quarry of legends for writers and as major repertoire for *wayang* theatre, the life and soul of the Indonesian.

The word *wayang* means 'shadow'. *Wayang Pūrva* is the oldest form and derives its repertoire from the parvans. In fact, the words *pūrva* and parvan are interchanged. Shadows of puppets are projected on a canvas stretched out on a wooden frame called *pangun*. The *wayang* has been an effective means by which the masses have imbibed and transmitted values. It has a place and function in the education of a child. According to R. Suprapto, *wayang* represents "female splendour, body balance and poise, harmony and self-confidence, intelligence and a concentrated mind, mental power, awareness and consciousness, beauty of body and colour combination, peace of mind and inner control, and cultivated self-discipline". Through *wayang*, the Mahābhārata is transmitted to the energy and exercise, rhythm and balance, culture and education, self-control and contemplation, charm and grace, nature and nurture of a Javanese. The princes of Java considered themselves incarnations of the heroes of the Mahābhārata and the *wayang* was an identification with their primordial ancestors.

The texts for *wayang* were the vast genre of *lakon,* which were based on and inspired by the parvans. J. Kats gives the title of 147 *lakons* which are texts used by *dalangs*. The *dalang* is a ritual performer and a skilled entertainer, whose effect on the spectators is voiced in the words: "The more we watch them, the more attractive they appear. Eventually we can't take our eyes off them" (Sweeney 1972:39). While the *lakons* drew their inspiration from the Mahābhārata, they modified and enlarged, innovated and accentuated the contents of the Epic, attuning them to the mind and moods, time and texture of society. The titles of some *lakons* are Lk. San hyan Viṣṇu karma, Lk. Narasoma, Lk. Bima bunkus, Lk. Palgunadi. The *lakons* are divided into eleven sections by J. Kats:

1. The divine origin of the Epic heroes Pāṇḍavas and Koravas
2. Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra
3. Hunting by Pāṇḍavas and Koravas
4. Expulsion of the Pāṇḍavas from the Court
5. Pāṇḍavas at Namarta
6. The game of dice
7. The twelve-year exile
8. The stay at Virāṭa
9. Preparations for the War
10. The Great War
11. After the War

Wayang travelled from Java to Bali. In Bali the repertoire of the *wayang* is more extensive, and the Balinese *dalang* borrows directly from the ancient Kakavins and not from their later prose or verse adaptations. A fundamental piece of research on *wayang* is the work of J. Kats, *De Wayang poerwa: een vorm van Javaans Toneel*, published in 1923 by the Balai Pustaka or Commission for Folk Literature. It provides basic information on several aspects of *waynag*: its origin, antiquity, character, various forms in prose and poetry, contents of their four cycles of prehistory (i) Arjuna Sasrabau (ii) Rāma (iii) Pāṇḍavas (iv) the classification and contents of *lakons*, technical construction, meaning of *wayang* for our times, symbolism and aesthetic significance, recapitulation of the stories of the four cycles of *wayang*, genealogies of epic heroes in the *lakons*, etc. This magnum opus of 446 pages on the *wayang pūrva*, deserves to be translated into English.

The Mahābhārata has been written, recited, sculpted and performed over South-East Asia in a profound unity of ritual and repertoire, myth and meaning, cosmic transcendence and intrinsic dynamism of life.

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3

The Mahābhārata: The Global Epic

SAROJA BHATE

This paper offers a glimpse into the vast literature on the Mahābhārata by scholars outside Indian sub-continent. Studies in the Mahābhārata began in the West with the editing of the manuscripts and translating some parts of the text. Bhagavadgītā was the first section from the Epic to be translated in 1785 by Charles Wilkins. Since then the Gītā "has become a medium for communicating to the outside world the essence of Indian thought."[1] Sir William Jone's English translation of Kālidāsa's Abhijñānaśākuntalam in 1790 and its German rendering by George Forster in 1791 inspired many scholars to approach the source of the story. In 1794 Charles Wilkins translated the story of Duḥṣyanta and Śakuntalā extracted from the Mahābhārata, which was further translated into French by Alfred Chezy in 1828. Wilkins also translated a few other parts of the Epic. A translation of the Mausalaparvan by Major David Price appeared under the title "The Last Days of Kṛṣṇa and the Sons of Pāṇḍu" in 1831.

It was, however, the Nala episode which attracted the attention of a large number of Indologists mainly because of the simple prose and its narrative importance. Franz Bopp, who had carried manuscripts of the Mahābhārata, among many others to Germany, translated the Nala and the Sāvitrī episode to Latin, in 1819 and 1829 respectively. A few other Latin translations followed thereafter. Bopp's pioneering work of editing and translating some parts of the Epic, however, had a deeper influence. In the Latin Introduction to one of his editions as well as in some of his notes Bopp initiated studies in the Mahābhārata by using historical and comparative methods. He made an observation, for instance, that the Mahābhārata legend of the flood and the fish is more archaic than its counterparts in other Purāṇas[2]. Bopp's editions of parts of the Epic as well as the Bombay and Calcutta editions which were gradually available were used by scholars for translating the Mahābhārata into different languages. The bibliographies record several translations into English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Rumanian languages. V. Zhukovsky, a Russian poet published his translation of the Nala episode in 1842. A large number of translations, both, metrical and prose, were published and made available for students in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Towards the close of the nineteenth century an edition with Dutch translation of portions from old Javanese text available in manuscripts by Juynball Hedric Herman was published by Brill. Germans continued the tradition of translating fragments from the Epic, and some important episodes of the Mahābhārata were rendered in metrical translation in Italian by Michele Kerbeker between 1933 and 1939. Another Italian translation is from Pisani, who selected about fifteen paragraphs and published the translation in 1954.

There also have been a few attempts of publishing translations of complete Mahābhārata. A remarkable achievement of French Indology in this connection deserves special mention. During 1863 and 1870, H. Fauche completed his translation of the first nine parvans based on the Calcutta Edition and L. Ballin took up the work after Fauche's death in 1899. He added to this project his translation of the next three parvans. So far, this is the only near-complete translation in French.

A similar effort was undertaken in Russian and translation of selected portions from the Epic by B.L. Smirnov was accomplished in eight volumes during 1955-1972. This was based partly on the Bombay Edition and partly on Calcutta edition. V. Kalyanov, another Indologist from Russia, completed his translation of the Ādiparvan in 1950. Kalyanov directed a team of scholars in the Academy of Leningrad, which undertook the project of a complete translation of the Mahābhārata. Seven volumes have been published till 1990 and it is reported that the Oriental Research Institute of St. Petersburg plans to complete the project under the supervision of Y. V. V Assilikov.

Credit goes to China rather than to a country in the West, of announcing completion of the translation of the complete text of the Mahābhārata[3] Though it had reached China as early as in the fifth century through Kumārajīva's Chinese translation of *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, the Mahābhārata was revisited for translation after a gap of many centuries, in 1954, by Prof. Kemu Jin. It began with the translation of the *Sāvitrī Upākhyāna.* With the establishment of a full-fledged section of Sanskrit and Pali studies in the department of Oriental Languages and Culture in Peking University in 1960 Prof. Xialin Ji and Prof. Kemu Jin resumed the work. The striking feature of this translation is that it is based on the critical edition. A team of scholars worked on the translation, completed in 2005.

In 1973, the project of English translation of the complete Mahābhārata was undertaken in the University of Chicago under the leadership of J.A.B. Van Buitenen. Buitinen completed translation of first five parvans till 1978. After a gap of almost 20 years the project is continued with the contribution from three scholars, Prof. G. Gitomer of DePaul University, J.L. Fitzgerald of Tennessee University and Prof. Wendy Doniger of Chicago University. Translation of parts of later parvans has been completed. At present, the work is in progress. Clay Sanskrit Library, a recent organization has undertaken the task of translating the complete Mahābhārata and the New York University Press has, so far, published English translation of parvans 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9. A number of scholars are still working on the remaining parvans. In Japan, seven volumes of Japanese translation of the first seven parvans by K. Kakimura have appeared just in two years, between 2003 and 2004.

The manuscripts of the Mahābhārata had reached Europe in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Franz Bopp is said to have made use of half a dozen manuscripts for bringing out the edition of Nala episode in 1819. With the arrival of more manuscripts a new field of studies was opened and scholars started taking interest in collating manuscripts. A critically edited text with apparatus, of the *Sāvitrī Upākhyāna* by Kossowicz appeared in 1861. Indologists while going through the manuscripts material were struck by the "bewildering profusion"[4] as well as "amazing mixture of versions[5]" in the transmission of the text of the Epic. A need for a critical edition was seriously felt when M. Winternitz addressed the session of the 11th International Congress of Orientalists at Paris in 1897 as a result of which Sanskrit Epic Text Society was founded. In the London session of 1904, the task was assigned to the International Association of Academics. The foundation was laid down with H. Ludder's specimen of a critical edition of the first sixty-seven stanzas of the Ādiparvan based on twenty-nine manuscripts. Although this "tender seedling planted with infinite care did not thrive in the uncongenial European soil"[6] it certainly laid the foundation of the unique critical edition which was completed in Pune during 1933-65. Credit goes to Winternitz and his team of students, Otto Stein and Bernard Geiger, Luders and his team of students, Johannes Nobel and others as well as the International Congress of Orientalists for preparing a ground for the critical edition and supporting the work started in the Bhandarkar Oriental

Research Institute, by handing over copies of manuscripts, collations and funds collected for the purpose.

Historians have observed that both the written and oral traditions of the Mahābhārata went hand in hand through the centuries. The Mahābhārata was not only orally recited but enacted too. It is reported that Wilhelm von Humbodt (1767-1835) was perhaps the first European to discover existence of the Mahābhārata in the form of puppet theatre in Java[7]. It is therefore, not surprising that the early Western scholars of the Epic were inspired to retell its stories and compose poems on some of its episodes. Sir William Jones is said to have composed a poem, sometime around 1785, in 287 couplets on the story of Draupadī and the Pāṇḍavas[8]. This was followed by many adaptations of the Epic in different modes.

Long before the work of translating and critically editing the Mahābhārata was undertaken, critical enquiries into different aspects of the Epic had already started. One of the prominent questions the early Indologists addressed was the origin and growth of the "literary monster" as Winternitz called it. It was generally believed that the Mahābhārata did not come from a single author. Its apparent heterogeneity suggests that it must have evolved over a period of several centuries and it may have derived from different cycles of legends and consequently from multiple authorship. The Mahābhārata scholars engaged themselves in separating different historical layers and trying to reach the Ur-text. Scholars of Greek and Roman literatures tried to apply the same method of analysis of data as used by scholars of Greek and Roman literatures. Christian Lassen who is "said to have inaugurated the modem period of critical scholarship relating to the Mahābhārata"[9] was the first proponent of this analytical approach, which is also the traditional Indian approach recorded in the Epic itself. He separated the Mahābhārata recension from the earlier Bhārata recension and tried to show that the Mahābhārata recension existed already at the time of Āśvalāyanagṛhyasūtra which belongs to 350 B.C. According to him, the names Pāṇḍu and Kṛṣṇa which signify white and black colours respectively are symbolic of tribes. He further suggested that all Kṛṣṇa-ite elements including the Gītā are interpolations belonging to period later than the fourth century B.C.[10]

Both the Holtzmanns suggested what is known as the "inversion theory"[11] according to which the Mahābhārata was originally the saga of the Kauravas who were virtuous heroes, whereas it was turned into a saga of the Pāṇḍavas, the adherers of Vaiṣṇavism who won the battle against the Kauravas, who worshipped Śiva. This inversion theory was rejected by later scholars like H. Oldenberg, who saw the Epic conflict as a development of the Vedic enmity between gods and demons[12]. A. Weber also tried to trace some Epic episodes to the Vedic sources[13]. A. Ludwig was, however, the first scholar to insist on a mythological basis to the Epic story. Through the "method of telescoping natural phenomena into mythology"[14] Ludwig interpreted the Epic tale as a solar drama with Pāṇḍu 'faded sun', Dhṛtarāṣṭra 'winter sun' and Duryodhana 'winter' playing their respective roles. His solar interpretation did not stand the scrutiny of later scholars. Among the other varieties of the inversion theory, mention should be made of L. von Schroeder and G. Grierson[15]. According to the former, the Epic developed its present form from the original saga of war between Kurus and their neighbouring tribes with Kṛṣṇa as their tribal hero, while according to the latter a brāhmaṇa and anti-brāhmaṇa conflict lies at the basis of the original story. These views were also dismissed, for one reason or another, in the course of time.

The solitary advocate of the synthetic theory, Joseph Dahlmann claimed that the Mahābhārata is a work by a single *diaskeust.* He pleaded for the synthetic unity of the Epic. According to him, two elements, the epic and the didactic have been beautifully fused together in the Mahābhārata, though the original purpose of the poet must have been didactic. Dahlmann's unitary approach was strongly criticized. It hardly found a following and the analytical approach prevailed in the word of Epic Scholars. Credit goes to Edward Washbum Hopkins, who is praised as the greatest Mahābhārata scholar from America in the beginning of the last century, for "clearing the ground for a proper approach to the Mahābhārata problem"[16]. According to him the Mahābhārata developed from its original form into the present shape through four stages, namely, the Bhārata lays, the Mahābhārata tale of Pāṇḍavas, the didactic interpolations and later additions. This growth took place during the period between 400 B.C. and 400 A.D. Hopkins maintained a clear distinction between the narrative and the didactic, and regarded the latter as interpolation. Though Hopkins' chronological table showing the stages of development of the Epic through the ages was dismissed as "as good as useless"[17] by one of the architects of the critical edition of the Mahābhārata in Pune, there has been no further development after him in the West on the issue of the origin and growth of the Epic[18].

The Mahābhārata was approached by some Western scholars with ethnological tools. G. I. Held is, for instance, described as one of the highly original Mahābhārata scholars who applied ethnological model to Mahābhārata studies. According to him, the Epic story which has a mythical basis assumes the existence of a social organization based on dual phratries and the phratry type relation between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas is like that between the Vedic gods and demons. The seed of the story thus belongs to Indo-Iranian culture[19]. W. Ruben, the well-known epic scholar, claimed that the Mahābhārata war at Kurukṣetra was a historical event though it was mythicized on the model of the Vedic war between gods and demons[20]. According to him the story of Kṛṣṇa also had a historical kernel; however, independent cycles of legends have been woven around it[21]. His comparative material, which is confined to South-East Asian world, in the form of independent legend cycles leads, however, to a hypothesis about the original Mahābhārata without Kṛṣṇa, which is not acceptable to scholars[22].

A new trend of Epic research has recently been developed. It consists of a comparison of the Epic narrative with ritual and myth from structural point of view[23]. This structural approach deals, on the one hand, with Indian ritual and myth, while on the other hand, it extends over Indo-European origin. Dumezil claimed the myth to be of Indian origin and stressed the continuation of the Vedic, the pre-Vedic and the para-Vedic in respect of the Epic characters like Kṛṣṇa who is, according to him, a transposition of Vedic Viṣṇu. According to M. Biardeu, it is the Hindu eschatological myth of *pralaya* with Śiva playing the destructive role and Viṣṇu playing the creative role which is transposed into the epic narrative. As far as mapping of ritual structure on the Epic structure is concerned J.A.B. Van Buitenen has suggested that the structure of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice as the basis of the narrative structure of the Sabhāparvan[24]. H. Gehrts suggests on the other hand that the whole Mahābhārata is modeled on the *Rājasūya.*[25]

The critical edition of the Mahābhārata evoked a new trend of epic criticism in the second half of the twentieth century. M. Biardeu challenged the very concept of the 'archetype' on which the super structure of the critical edition is built. She refused to accept the development of the manuscript tradition from a single archetype. Instead she suggested that diverse manuscripts are written versions of diverse oral traditions. The Mahābhārata, according to her, is not a single text with many versions but rather all versions together constitute the Epic tradition[26]. J. A. B. Van Buitenen strongly defended the hypothesis of archetype against Biardeu's criticism and justified the traditional approach to the Mahābhārata as *itihāsa* 'history'[27].

In recent times, studies in the Epic are focused more on deeper insights into characters like Kṛṣṇa and Draupadī by means of explorations into myth and ritual. Hiltebeitel, one of the leading contemporary Mahābhārata scholars is working on the Epic as a living tradition and comparing the text with existing rituals as well as dramatic performances, particularly in south Indian tradition. He has shown in one of his recent publications that Draupadī is a goddess in South Indian tradition, and that the Mahābhārata narrative bears some awareness about this tradition. He observes that the Mahābhārata "is a story that India has never ceased to rethink and retell".

Recently the Mahābhārata studies have taken an electronic turn. With the launching of the electronic Mahābhārata in 1991 Prof. Muneo Tokunaga from Kyoto University, Japan has initiated a new line of research based on the e-text. Tokunaga, who accomplished this tremendous job of creating e-files, says, while explaining the advantage of the e-text, "An epic study based on the constituted text of the critical edition contained in those electronic files can no longer be called scholarly achievements in the strict sense of the words. We have entered a new era of epic studies"[28]. The electronic version is certainly most trustworthy and useful for statistical analysis. In his recent paper entitled 'Statistic Survey of the Śloka in the Mahābhārata' Prof. Tokunaga has presented his observations on all the patterns and peculiarities of śloka verses in the Epic with special attention to the violation of the so called Piṅgala's prohibitions[29]. He has also presented grammatical study of the epic subjunctive based on the electronic files and has stated that the subjunctive forms are not an integral part of the epic verbal system[30]. "Online cooperative research project of the Mokṣadharmaparvan in search of a new style of Sanskrit philology in the digital age" is mentioned by Tokunaga as an interesting example of studies motivated by electronic files. The project was confined for two years and its outcome is published in the form of two papers by him, which contain an annotated translation of parts of Mokṣadharmaparvan. This pioneering enterprise of online research is continued in the form of a new international cooperative research project of Kyoto University entitled 'Virtual Ancient Arguments on Difference and Affinity' under the leadership of Prof. A. Akamatsu.[31] It is probably still going on. The expansion of the horizons of Mahābhārata research in Japan on account of his electronic version is summed up by Tokunaga in the following words: "The Japanese contribution to Epico-Purāṇ-ic Studies now covers a wide area ranging from Wortkunde to the studies of meters, myths, legends, cosmology and cosmogony, history of mathematics, Hindu law and *Rājadharma* and even to the Old Javanese version of the Bhagavadgītā'[32].

Another e-text of the Epic, which claims to be a revision of Tokunaga's version comes from John Smith of Cambridge University. It has been launched in 2001. Dr. Smith and his team of students have been working on different problems related to the Epic, with the help the of e-version[33]. Research is being carried out on themes such as formulaic language in the Mahābhārata and grammatical patterns with a view to tracing the bardic Epic. Another good example of computer-aided research is the examination of the critical edition of the Mahābhārata in light of recent developments in the textual criticism. Wendy Philips Rodriguez, one of Dr. Smith's students tried to apply the biological technique of phylogenetic analysis to the evidence of similar / dissimilar manuscripts readings of a portion of the Epic in order to see to what extent the new technique coincides with the results of the traditional textual criticism. The work is still going on and the results so far achieved are encouraging.

How does the West look at the Mahābhārata? I would like to cite two representative reactions, one from the non-academic world and the other from semi-academic world. B. A. Van Nooten has, in one of his footnotes in his book, *The Mahābhārata,* referred to an advertisement for an American movie (Twentieth century fox movie of 1964 titled 'What a way to go' featuring Shirley Maclaine) which reads, "A 20th century Draupadī takes birth in Hollywood"[34]. This has a reference to the female character's free behaviour with the male friends. Draupadī is here cited as an example of immorality. Another citation is from an Internet site displaying William Buck's lecture on the Mahābhārata. He concludes with these remarks: "The Mahabharata does not end with Yudhiṣṭira's welcome to heaven any more than it began with king Pāṇḍu's killing of the stag. The story resonates. It is an easy story to step into. When Peter Brook staged his nine hour dramatic realization of the Mahābhārata in New York several years ago, the New Yorkers faulted him for making the story an allegory about the dangers of life in a nuclear age. But Brook did not work that allegory in. Jean-Claude Carriere's script is actually very straight and faithful to the original Epic story in its details. What the New Yorker felt was the story's resonance. It has always been a current story".

I conclude in the words of Dr. R. N. Dandekar, one of the strong pillars of the mighty project of the critical edition, who had expressed views similar to those of William Buck. "The appeal to the Mahābhārata is not merely Indian or national. It is essentially human or universal...Verity, the Mahābhārata constitutes an outstanding record of the collective conscious, unconscious and subconscious of man. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the Mahābhārata is that every reader finds in it something, which is, as it were, specifically addressed to him. In this sense, the Mahābhārata belongs not only to the Indians, but also to every citizen of the world"[35].

NOTES

1. B. A. Van Mooten, 1971, pp. 112
2. H. V. Stietencron et al, see title No. 4187
3. I am grateful to Mr. Hong Luo and Bill Mak for information on

the studies on the Mahābhārata in China
4. V. S. Sukthankar, 1933, pp. 9
5. Ibid, pp. 23
6. Ibid, pp. 11
7. Valentina Stache Rosen, 1981, pp. 6
8. Garland Canon, 1971
9. R. N. Dandekar, 1981, pp. 274
10. Ibid, pp. 275
11. A. Hiltebeitel, 1979, pp. 68
12. Ibid, pp. 71
13. R. N. Dandekar, 1981, pp. 275
14. Ibid, pp. 71
15. R. N. Dandekar, 1981, pp. 217-72
16. Ibid, pp. 276
17. A. Hiltebeitel, 1979, pp. 77
18. For an Indian contribution to this point, see, R. N. Dandekar, 1981, pp. 262-291
19. A. Hiltebeitel, 1979, pp. 85
20. Ibid, pp. 87
21. Ibid, pp. 88
22. Ibid, pp. 90
23. For details see, A. Hiltebeitel, 1991, pp. 22
24. Bruce M. Sullivan, 1991, pp. 22
25. Ibid, pp. 18
26. Ibid, pp. 20
27. Ibid, pp. 24
28. M. Tokunaga, 2003, pp.103
29. M. Tokunaga, 1995
30. M. Tokunaga, 2000
31. M. Tokunaga, 2003, pp. 104
32. Ibid, pp. 109
33. I am grateful to Dr. John Smith for the information on Mahābhārata Studies being carried out by his team of students
34. B. A. Von Nooten, 1971, pp.134
35. R. N. Dandekar, 1981, pp. 265-266

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4

The Mahābhārata in the Literary Creativity of Indonesia

MANJUSHREE GUPTA

The Mahābhārata, as a glorious epic, has found receptive and fertile grounds across the shores of Bhārata, i.e. South East Asia, known for its traditions of literary creativity. There the text was nurtured and gifted newer expressions in artistic and literary forms. Particularly in the island of Java, the Epic grew, developed, flourished and lived.

The Mahābhārata exerted enormous influence on the religious and political structures in the Island. Strong traditions of ancestor worship reinforced the practice of honouring East Javanese kings as deities, and the deification of rulers enhanced their prestige and sanctity. As Prof. Lokesh Chandra observes, "frozen levels of tribal cultures blossomed in the spring of a new creativity in the sublime and secular Sanskrit tradition". The purvas, the Kakavins and the *wayangs* are cultural symphonies, celebrating the temporary sojourn of mankind in anticipation of the beyond. The classical *wayang* in particular brings to life the totality of the universe, highlighting its spiritual unity. The white screen receiving the shadow, is the world. The garuḍa shaped lamp is the sun that creates and maintains life on earth (*Kamala Ratnam*). The symbolism of Garuḍa is deliberate, because his elder brother Aruṇa is the charioteer of the Sun and so can approach the blazing orb.

The Mahābhārata story is related in terms of twelve generations of the Pāṇḍavas, beginning from lord Viṣṇu and ending with Parikṣit. The people accepted its lore and its valour, its humour and tears, its entire philosophy of life as their own. There emerged from the text the epic personas, vibrant in their Javanese avatāra-s. To make the identification more real and complete, the Indonesians claim that the first historic king of Java, by the name of Jadajana (?), was the son of Parikṣit, son of Abhimanyu and Uttarā, and grandson of Arjuna.

Sansang Inscription and King Balitung Mahā Śambhū: AD 898-910

The earliest evidence of Sanskrit epics, or stories from it, is found in the Sangsang copper plate inscription issued in the name of king Balitung Mahā Śambhū in AD 907 to confirm the granting of freeholds to the monastery of Dalinan (Sarkar 1972:85-98). The celebrations on the occasion included a macarita of the story of Bhīmakumāra by a certain Nālu who also danced as Kīcaka and a *wayang* performance by Galigi on the same story. Its two fold performance is indicative of its appeal. Since the name Kīcaka is also mentioned, it refers to the story from the Virāṭaparvan.

The Parvans and Dharmavaṅśa Těguh Ananta Vikramottuṅgadeva: AD 991-1006-07

Virāṭaparvan in turn is the only parvan that contains elaborate dates of its first recital. The recitation was held for one month minus one evening. Commencing on the fifteenth of the waning moon, the month of Asuji, the day was tungle, kaliwon, in the wuku Pahang 918 Śaka year and concluding on the mawulu, wage, in the wuku Madagkungan, the fourteenth of the waning moon, the month of Kārtika, which is Wednesday, 14th Oct. to Thursday, 12th Nov. 996 AD. Since these are the dates of its recital, the actual rendering of the Virāṭaparvan itself must have taken place prior to Oct. 996 (Supomo.p.4).

Its popularity and importance is evident from the fact that the king attended all its performances. "The Virāṭa is one of the shortest of the major parvan-s, full of action and excitement . . . it was the Mahābhārata. It even, in a way, supplanted the Ādi. The Mahābhārata reciters commenced their sessions with the Virāṭa and not with Ādi" (Raghuvīra). The *maṅgala* bears the name of Dharmavaṅśa Tĕguh, who ascended the throne in AD 991.

The name of Dharmavaṅśa Tĕguh occurs in the *maṅgala* of Ādiparvan and Bhīṣmaparvan as well. The *maṅgala* in Bhīṣmaparvan pays homage to him in exalted words, "He can be called Hari because he is Viṣṇu, being a bearer of Śrī; because he is the protector of the world; because he is a lion, fully showing in everything a leonine character". Here he also bears the title of "King of Medang". The combined testimony of the Javanese and Balinese records and the Śivaśāsana (Dharmavaṃśa's legal code) indicate that these three parvan-s belong to the same group rendered into Old Javanese during the reign of Dharmavaṅśa Tĕguh, which came to an abrupt end in 1006 when Śrīvijaya attacked and destructed the capital of Mataram. This catastophe that caused his untimely death along with his entire family, also brought a period of slackened literary activity for the next 150 years.

Six other parvan-s from the Mahābhārata, the Sabhāparvan, Udyogaparvan, Āśramavāsaparvan, Mausalaparvan, Prasthānikaparvan and Svargārohaṇaparvan are from the extant corpus of the nine parvan-s in Old Javanese. The rendition of these six parvan-s was possibly completed within a period when Sanskrit was still studied in Java, even if by only a few (Supomo, pp.6). However about the Udyogaparvan, we have Dr. Juynboll's hypothesis that it was composed in the beginning of the eleventh century. The Ādiparvan and the Virāṭaparvan formed the main source of the wayang-parvan stories, while the Udyogaparvan and

Bhīṣmaparvan were the foundation for the first part of the Bhāratayuddha, a Kakavin based on the story of the Mahābhārata (Sarkar). A section of this epic inspired Mpu Kanwa to compose the *Kakavin Arjunavivāha.* It is the single Kakavin written (1030-35) under the reign of Erlaṅga. It is also the first, including the undated ones, that revolves around only one of the epic heroes.

Arjunavivāha and Śrī Lokeśvara Dharmavaṅśa Erlaṅga Anantavikramottuṅgadeva: AD 1009/AD 10-1049.

Dharmavaṅśa Tĕguh's son-in-law, Erlaṅga had been in Mataram since AD 1001. In the aftermath of the destruction, Erlaṅga escaped the enemy, and fled with his faithful servant Narottama to a hermitage at Wonogiri (928 of the Śaka year = 1006/7). We find descriptions of the disaster in the famous "Calcutta Stone" dated AD 1041, one of the few bilingual texts known in Indonesia with one side in Sanskrit verses, the other in Old Javanese prose. Concerned with the foundation by Erlaṅga of a hermitage, south of Surabaya (formerly Soerabaja), they give lengthy introductions in which Erlaṅga's struggle is explained. In fact, these preliminaries occupy the major part of both texts as though Erlaṅga's main consideration was that they should present an autobiography emphasizing the motives, course and results of his struggle, leading to the foundation of a strong East Javanese state.

In the year 1009/10, at the age of twenty, he came out of hiding and was officially consecrated as ruler of a small principality of Pasuran near the Brantas delta, but remained low profile lest his adversaries seek him out. Therefore, tentatively his sway extended over only a fragment of the kingdom. To quote Kern's transcription:

> *śakendre'tha śaśalānchanāgnivadane yāte mahāvatsare*
> *māghe māsi sitatrayodaśa-tithau vāre śaśinyutsukaiḥ /*
> *āgatya praṇatair janair dvijavarais sāśvāsam abhyarthita-ś*
> *śrī lokeśvaranīralanganṛpatiḥ pāhītyutāntāṅ kṣitim //*

This corresponds to in the Śaka year i.e.(moon) one, (fire) three, (mouth) nine, or Śaka 931=1009/10. In other words, this happened three years after the destruction of the capital, when prominent people there were in despair in the chaos and therefore appealed to Erlaṅga to re-establish order: "protect thou the entire earth up to its end". The text makes it clear that Erlaṅga accepted this proposal and then started his reign officially, but he required many more years to deal with his numerous enemies. The just quoted verse from the Calcutta inscription is interesting for two other reasons. In the last quarter, members of the delegation say: *pāhītyutāntāṅkṣitim,* "protect thou the earth up to its end!" For those familiar with Indian epigraphy these words remind one strongly of almost the same words addressed by the dying Candragupta I to his son Samudragupta in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription in Northern India around AD 330: *nikhilaṃ pāhyevam ūrvīm iti* "Protect thou thus the entire earth!"

A similar example can be noticed at the accession of king Harṣa (A.D. 606-647). In the account by the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Tsang it is told how Harṣavardhana, after the death of his brother-in-law Grahavarman and his elder brother Rājyavardhana, was approached by a delegation of nobles requesting him to mount the throne. After an oracle, in which the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara gave him the same advice in a dream, Harṣa finally decided to accede to the throne.

These examples indicate that the accession of both Samudragupta and Harṣavardhana was contested before they were able to establish their dominance and reign as kings. The comparison strongly suggests that (i) Erlaṅga's succession was contested and that (ii) at the time this work was written Erlaṅga had not yet gained a decisive and final victory over his adversaries. This is hardly surprising if one looks at the genealogy presented in the Sanskrit part of the inscription where Erlaṅga traces his ancestry back to king

Sindok for three generations which is a long and fairly tortuous line.

There are indications that in A.D. 1022 he succeeded his father in Bali, the only Bali-Javanese prince to govern the islands of both Bali and Java. Three years later, Śrīvijaya was crippled by the Cola raid in A.D. 1023/24 and was no longer a threat to East Javanese kingdom. Taking advantage of the turn of events, Erlaṅga took the military offensive in 1028, to include all of East Java in his realm. Thereupon he strategically wrested control of East Java from Sumatran overlords and succeeded in restoring order out of the chaos prevalent all over Java at that time. By about A.D. 1030 he had made such progress that Śrīvijaya recognised him. Not only did the king give his daughter in marriage to Erlaṅga, but also a *modus vivendi* was established between the two powers.

However, his ultimate victory was not before A.D. 1035, "having placed his feet on the head of his enemies, he took his place on the throne of lions, decorated with jewels", he moved his capital to Kahuripan which stretched from Pasuran in the east to Madiun in the west. His name itself was an expression of his destiny, for Erlaṅga implies "the one who has crossed the shores" and Śrī Lokeśvara Nīralaṅga befits him most, when requested to protect the earth up to its end. (*śrī Lokeśvaranīralaṅganṛpatiḥ pāhītyutāntān kṣitim* (insc.15d)).

This fine statesman had infused new vigour into East Java's economy and political stability. However his reign has been celebrated by later generations chiefly for the literary and artistic renaissance, both in Java and Bali. Much in the tradition of the patron's predecessor Dharmavaṅśa, a court poet named Mpu Kanwa composed the Old Javanese Kakavin, Arjunavivāha. The *maṅgala* is addressed to Erlaṅga.

ambĕk sang paramārthapaṇḍita huwus limpad sakeng śūnyatā
tan sangkeng viṣaya prayojana nira lwir sanggraheng lokita

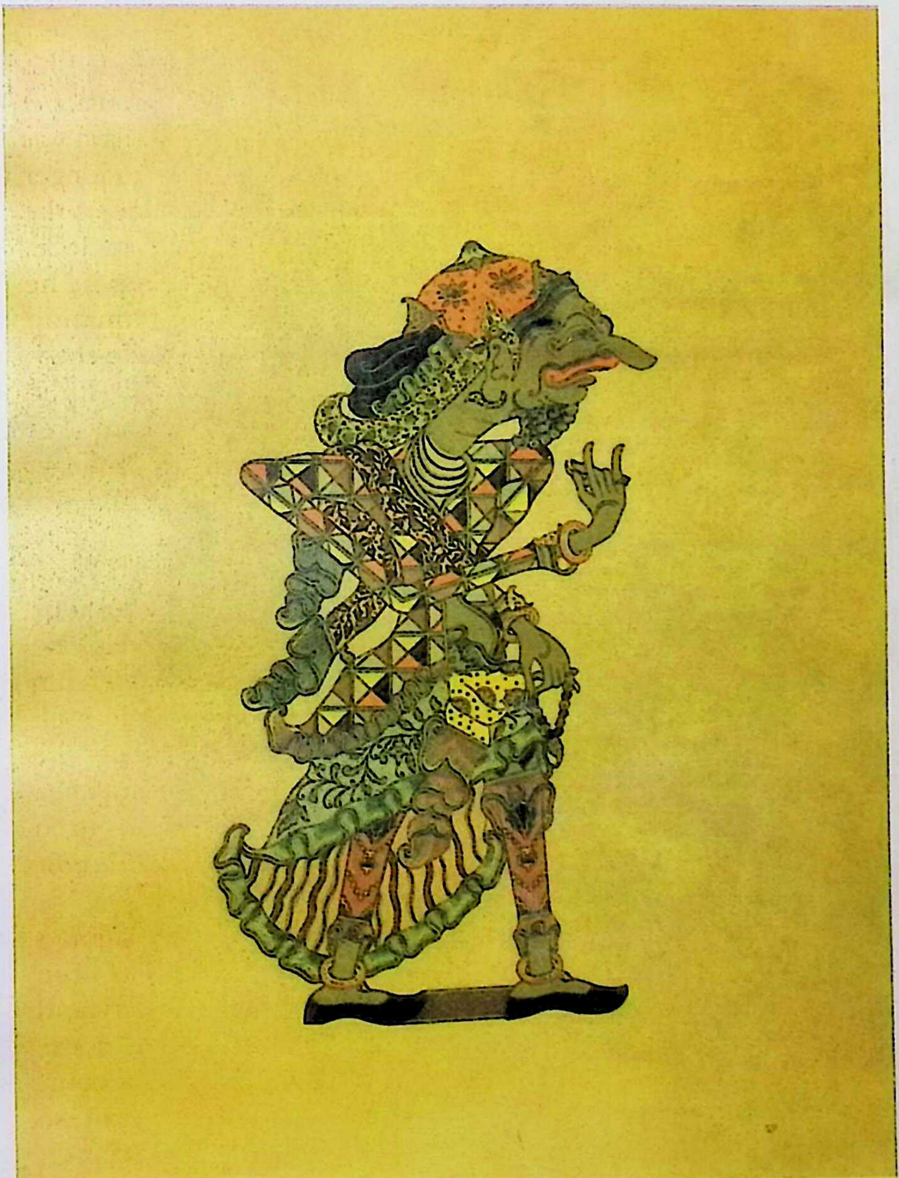

Plate 1. Droṇa.

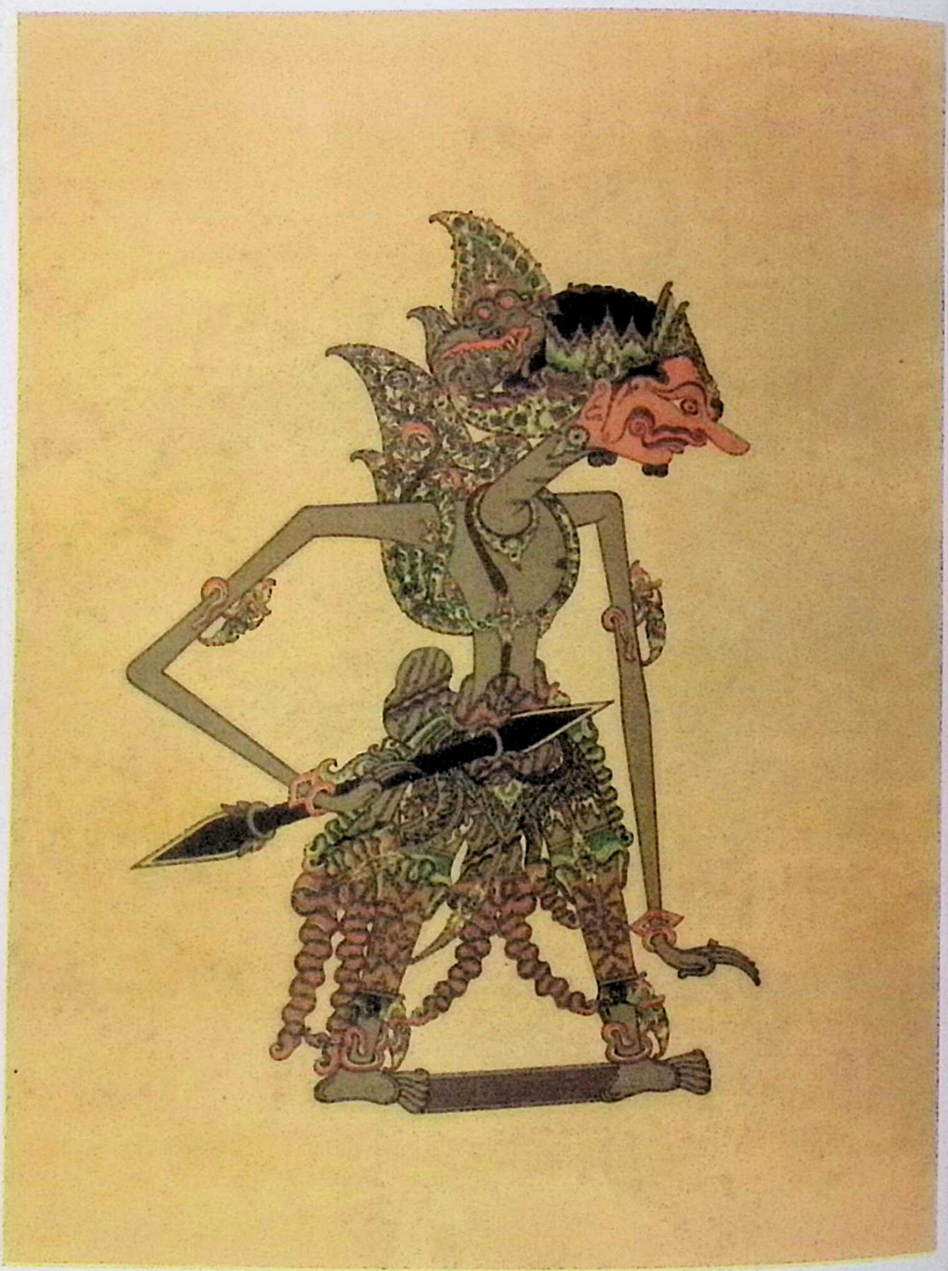

Plate 2. Kretawarma.

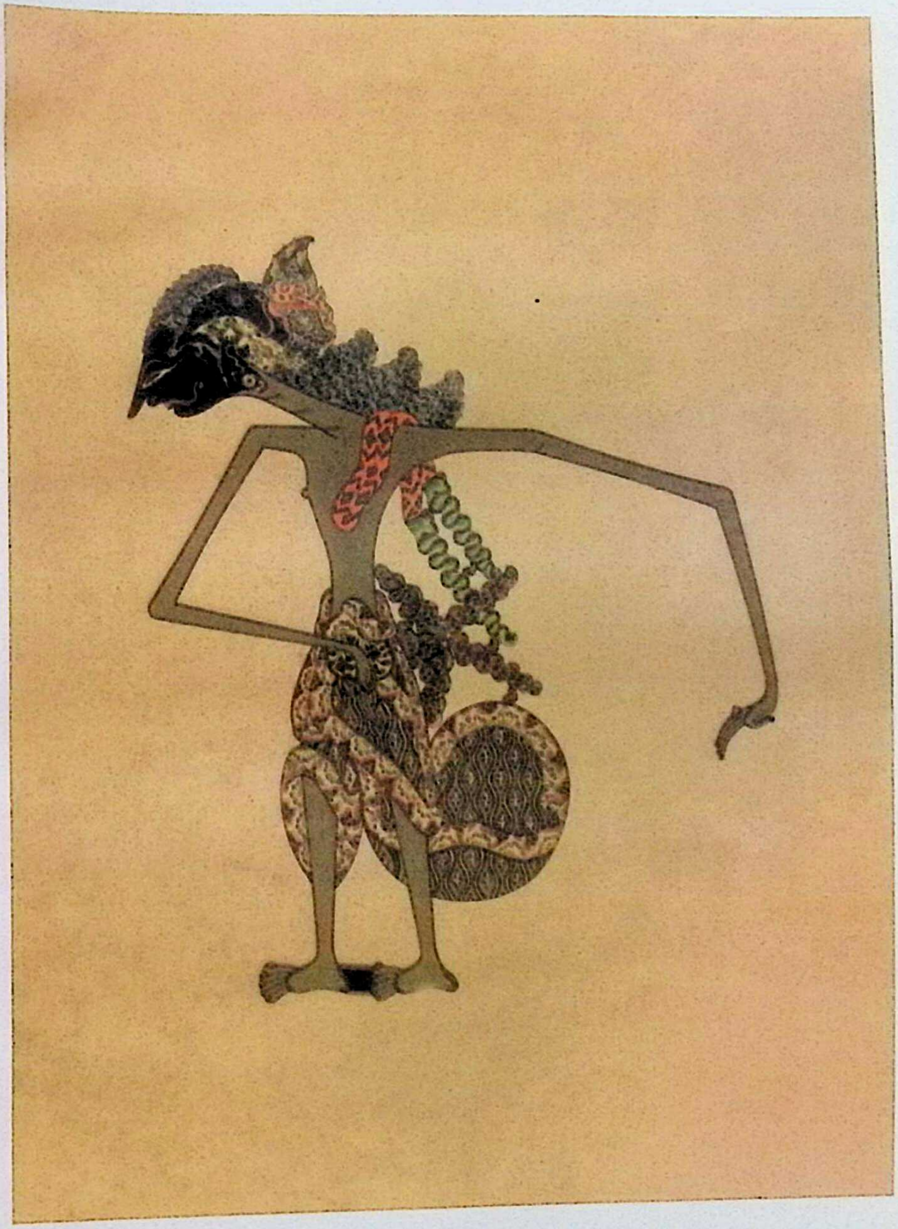

Plate 3. Parasara.

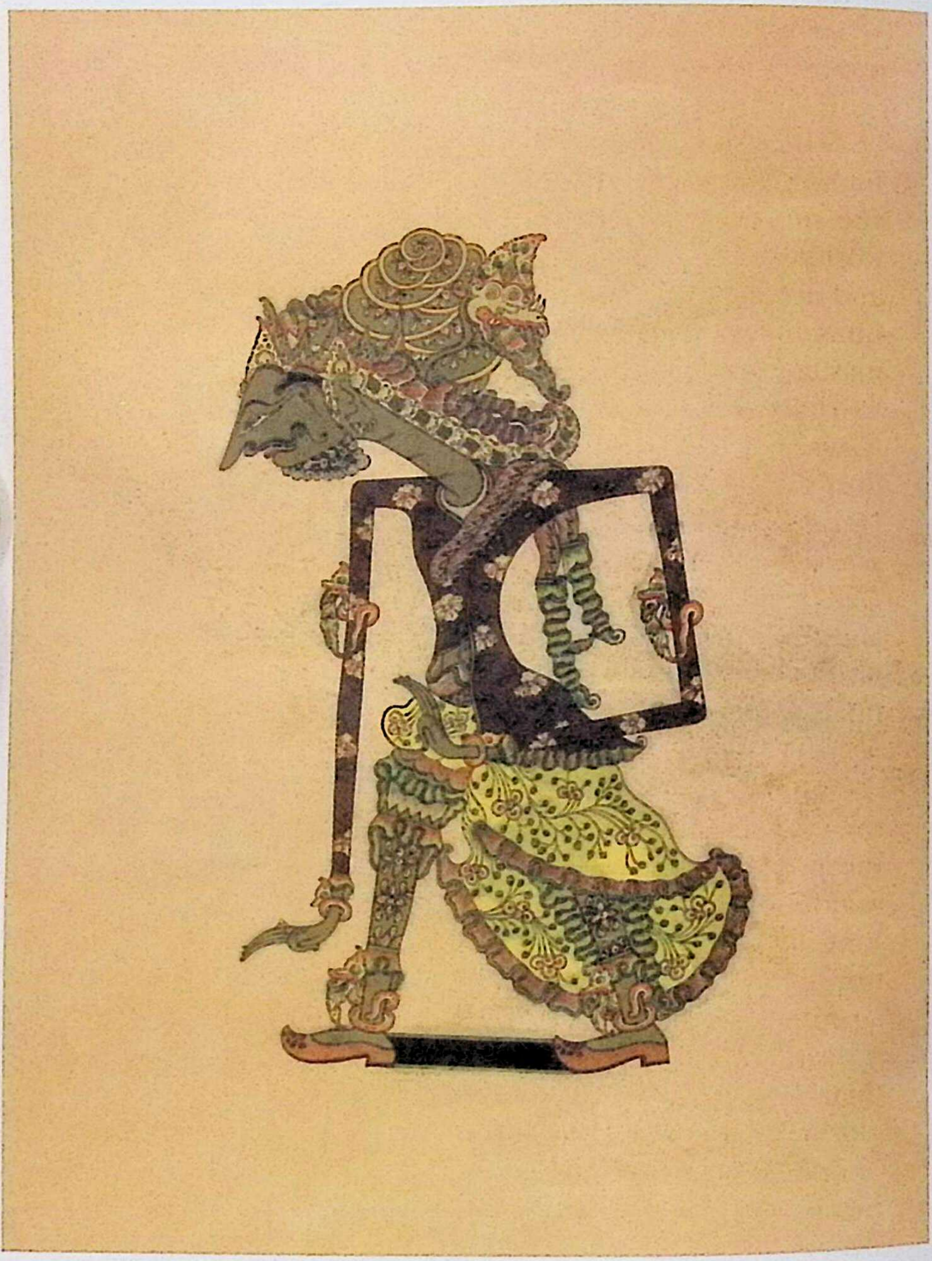

Plate 4. Abijasa of Wjasa.

siddhā ning yaśavīrya don ira sukhā ning rat kiningking nira
santoṣāhĕlĕtan kĕlir sira sakeng sang hyang jagatkāraṇa
(*AV.*1.1a-d)

"The mind of the true sage has penetrated into the highest. From the state of utter void, not from the realm of the senses, proceeds his intention to devote himself to worldly matters. That his performance of meritorious deeds and acts of bravery may be successful in his aim; he exerts himself constantly for the well-being of the world. In perfect mastery of self and peace of mind, he is resigned (content) to remaining separated by the screen from the divine 'Cause' of the world. "The crown of my head against the dust of the sandals of him who reveals himself in this way. He is an unceasing source of blessing for the casting into poetic form of Pārtha's triumph in the abode of the gods" (*AV.*1.2a-d). Taking Arjuna's triumph as the essential theme, and through the magic power of his literary work, the poet had hoped to contribute to the achievement of Erlaṅga's final victory (Zoetmulder).

The episodes in the Kakavin had their counterparts in the contemporary realities of Erlaṅga's life. It was meant as the poet's gift to his royal patron, on the occasion of his wedding to the daughter of Sangrāma Vijayottuṅgavarman, King of Śrīvijaya. The inherent power of the story and the words chosen to recount it were ordained to make the union a prosperous one (Zoetmulder). Arjuna's sevenfold wedding with the seven heavenly maidens headed by Suprabhā and then Tilottamā, represents a vision of Erlaṅga's ascend to a glorious world of unparalleled victory.

Erlaṅga was buried at a place called Belahan, an ancient brick bathing place surrounded by temples on Mt. Penanggungan. Carved in red tufa stone against the back wall of the bathing tank is one of East Java's greatest icons; Viṣṇu seated on his vāhana, the Garuḍa (1.90m). A chronogram carved on a stone slab enabled to date the monument to 1049, which was built to commemorate Erlaṅga, and the belief is that the image represents the ascended King Erlaṅga.

Bhāratayuddha and Śrī Mapanji Jayabhaya: AD 1135-1157/59

At variance with the policies throughout his reign, Erlaṅga divided his kingdom. His heir, princess Sangrāmavijaya, refused the throne to pursue her life as a hermit. Erlaṅga had two sons, each born to different concubines, whom he feared would compete for the throne after his death. As a result, the kingdom was divided and partitioned into two separate kingdoms of Janggala and Kediri.

Jayabhaya is the best remembered of Erlaṅga's successors. He reigned over the state of Kediri, with Daha as its capital, from 1135 to 1157/59 and reunified the kingdom after the split, that occurred with the death of his predecessor Erlanga. The state of Kediri was a prosperous, powerful and well-organized polity under King Jayabhaya who made it the centre of a flowering Javanese literature. *Bhāratayuddha*, a Kakavin based on the story of the Mahābhārata was rendered during this period by two authors.

Dating

The date in the *maṅgala* is expressed as a chronogram: "Thus mpu Sĕḍah created a memorial to 'a man who rode a horse as white as the moon, who looks like Deva Sūrya in the dry season, who uses a saddle made of his enemies' hair who looks like the moon at the time of rising , whose enemies beg for mercy when he appears who is savage in battle, like Deva Śiva, who wishes to vanquish the enemy".

nāhan don mpu Sĕḍah makīrtya
śakakāla ri saṅa kuda śuddha candramā
san sākṣad Dharimūrti yan katiga
nitya makapalana keśa niṅ musuh

saṅ lwir lek pratipāda śukla
pinalakvan ahuripa vijil nireṅ ripu
riṅ praṅ darpa Paśuprabhūpama
nirāhyun i kaduṅulan in parāṅmukha.

The first line gives the numerical value of 9-7-0-1 read A.D. 1079 S=1157.

The second line gives the name of the Javanese month, 'the third month' (September-October).

The third line, is the lunar date, the first of the bright half of the month.

The fourth line names the six-day, five-day and seven-day week, pa=paniruan, pa=pahiṅ, śu=śukra and the wuku, ḍuṅulan. Thus the date of commencement corresponds to 6th Sept. 1157. The entire composition must have been completed before 23rd Sept. 1159 as a royal charter dated the same bears the name of Śrī Sarveśvara and not King Jayabhaya as the ruler of Daha (Damais1952:69).

Patronage

The *maṅgala* opens with a eulogy offered directly to the king. He is the hero who desiring the annihilation of all hostile powers, devoted himself to the performance of sacrifice on the battlefield. He uses as flowers offerings the head ornaments of his enemies who have fallen in battle and the forehead ornaments of the deceased kings are his rice grains. His sacrificial fire is the blazing fire of the palaces of his adversaries in which he constantly sacrifices the heads of his foes, decapitated while standing in their chariots.

Thus the fame of such a hero, renowned as victorious in battle, spread throughout the three worlds and even his vanquished enemies acknowledged him as lord of the world. The world honoured him and sages, Brahmins, Śaivites and the Buddhists blessed him. Thereupon he is granted a favour by Girinātha that he shall be the world sovereign Prabhu Cakravartī and victorious over the enemies Jayaśatru.

Furthermore, he will be one with Him in essence. As a consequence of this favour, all his adversaries surrender to him including Hemabhūpati, and his kingdom enjoys great prosperity (BY.1.1-5).

With this in mind the poet created the chronogram extolling the king for his two fold quality of severity like the sun towards his foes as long as they remain obdurate, and clemency like the moon as soon as they surrender to him. Further more whosoever offers him praise is verily touching the lotus feet of Śiva. Therefore it is befitting that he should be implored to grant his support and blessing for the composition of the poetic story of the war of the Pāṇḍavas against the king of the Kauravas (BY.1.5-7).

The final canto (BY.52.1-13) provides valuable insight into the way the work came into being. By way of conclusion to the story , we read that while Yudhiṣṭhira was recognized as the protector of the world after the destruction of evil, as an incarnation of Dharma, he is ruling the world in peace with Kṛṣṇārjuna Viṣṇumūrti as guardian for an assured continual victory *sira rakṣaka karaṇa nira n tulus jaya* (BY.52.1). Now that Duryodhana is no more and the fear of doom is dispelled, therefore *Viṣṇu saha vāndhava* returns to heaven (BY.52.2). However with the arrival of kaliyuga, misfortune and calamity make an appearance. The incomparable beauty of the island of Java loses all its lustre (BY.52.3). Viṣṇu is moved by pity and descends to earth once more. Kṛṣṇa who was universally celebrated for his victories on the battlefield *jayeṅ raṇa*, now bears the name of Bhaṭāra Jayabhaya. Within a short time all his enemies are forced to submission and peace reigns supreme again (BY.52.4).

Authors

A remarkable feature in this context is that one and the same composition is rendered by two authors, both mentioned by name. The epilogue is authored by Panuluh who speaks of mpu Sĕḍah as the author of the first part of the *kakavin khyātīṅ rāt mpu Sĕḍah wwaṅ uttama sirāṅikĕt* (BY.52.13ab). The name of the latter appears also in the *maṅgala*, where it is said that he authored the chronogram contained in it nāhan don mpu *Sĕḍah makīrtya* (BY.1.6a).

After a description of Kṛṣṇa's descent as Bhaṭāra Jayabhaya there follows a passage "In short none refuse Bhaṭara Hari Jayabhayāṅḍirī who rules in Daha, their obeisance (BY.52.9), but now he has become a source of worry by summoning me and insisting on seeing me give proof of my ability to compose a tale of yore, narrating his victories in battle at the time he was Kṛṣṇa and was known everywhere as the protector of the Pāṇḍavas during their war. These (his) glorious deeds of yore are celebrated as Śalyavadha in Bhāratayuddha." (BY.52.10).

In the final conclusion he writes, "So I was not alone in composing the story. There is one who has learnt the art in the service of His Majesty, the eminent mpu Sĕḍah, world renowned, who wrote the first part, faultless in its aesthetic qualities. The episode of Śalya becoming the commander in chief marks the beginning of the work commissioned (to me); it is clumsy and insipid. How regrettable that the sweeetness of the court poet's poem should receive such a bitter coating thereby" (BY.52.13d). The last line seems a genuine regret of his inadequacies, for he praises Sĕḍah's work as faultless in its poetic qualities uttama sirāṅikĕt.

This gives rise to speculate reasons for this double authorship unique to the traditions of Kakavin. Woven around this is the romantic story in which the queen served the poet as the role model for Śalya's wife, giving rise to the king's suspicion and the poet had to pay for his impertinence with his disgrace and death penalty. However, there is no historical evidence to this effect. The dual authorship, and Panuluh's commission from the king are the only explicit facts put forward by the text.

The dual authorship compels to question where Sĕḍah's work ends and Panuluh's begins. Panuluh commenced his work from the episode of Śalya becoming commander of the Kaurava's army. This consecration is briefly mentioned in BY.36.1ab. However the whole episode begins with the deliberation to choose an appropriate warrior to succeed Karṇa. Therefore it is more likely that Panuluh's work begins from canto 33, which is written in Śārdūla-vikrīḍīta, the same metre used by him to begin his earlier work Harivaṃśa and interestingly both poems also end in the same metre namely Jagaddhita. Sěḍah's work ends therefore with the episode of the slaying of Karṇa and the description of the grief over the death of the son of the sun god: *panarkê saṅ hyaṅ Sūrya lĕlĕh aṅusā saṅ karahatan mataṅ yan raktāṅ aṅga kaharas i rāh san věka kuněṅ...* (BY.32.3-4).

Divinity

In the light of the above it is easier to comprehend certain inconsistencies, in particular, the representation of the relationship between the king and divinity. The *maṅgala* written by mpu Sĕḍah presents Jayabhaya as one in essence with Śiva, whereas the epilogue written by mpu Panuluh celebrates him as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, though not absolutely contradictory, as both Śiva and Viṣṇu are incarnations of the Absolute. The latter had no obvious choices as the king himself ordered this commemoration of the heroic feats performed by him in his former incarnation as Kṛṣṇa. Having established Kṛṣṇa's heroic feats, the author proceeds in the epilogue to abundantly establish the close affinity of King Jayabhaya with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.

Java at that time had strong faith in Viṣṇu as the god of Kṣatriyas in particular. Therefore the Kakavins repeatedly mention that the Kṣatriyas having fulfilled their *dharma* by fighting valiantly and meeting their end on the battlefield are received by Viṣṇu in His Heavenly Realm. The Kediri kings from Jayabhaya onwards have names in the charters designating them as incarnations of Viṣṇu. As is also evident from the three charters dated 1135, 1136 and 1144 of which the first bears Jayabhaya's full name and title *Śrī Mahārāja Saṅ Mapañji Jayabhaya Śrī Warmeśvara Madhusūdanāvatārānindita Suhṛt Siṁha Parākrama Digjayottungadeva.* Here the Kṣatriya king Jayabhaya in his role as the protector of the earthly world is justifiably projected his relationship to Viṣṇu who is venerated as the protector of the Universe.

Various religious groups co-existing in one kingdom under the same ruler was a common feature in ancient Java. The king was worshipped as god incarnate by his subjects regardless of their allegiance to different religious beliefs. The oft repeated grouping *ṛsi-śaive-sogata* in various Kakavins, finds a mention in *Bhāratayuddha* too (BY.1.2d). Further, when the Pāṇḍavas visit Bhīṣma on his couch of arrows and pay homage to Droṇa their guru, he is referred to as Buddharūpa Śivarūpa (BY.23.11d). Seen in this light, "the invocation of Śiva in the *maṅgala* and of Viṣṇu in the epilogue is not unusual. It may have been pre-intended that *Bhāratayuddha* be written by two poets, one devotee of Śiva and the other of Viṣṇu" (Sopomo).

Comparison

Bhāratayuddha follows in its general outlines the story of the Mahābhārata, beginning with Udyogaparvan, from adhyāya eighty-nine onwards and ending with the massacre of the majority of the Pāṇḍava heroes in the night following the battle in the Sauptikaparvan. The narrative evolves on the king's dictates and echoes his glory, sanctifying social and political ramifications of his reign, along with creating an image of himself to daunt any external threats, evident from the emphasis on the king's heroic feats as Kṛṣṇa in his former life and as *avatāra* in the present. The epic parvan-s laid its foundations and the old Javanese poets rendered it in the form of a Kakavin.

Before drawing any critical conclusions, we should bear in mind a few points:

1. It is foremost an adaptation and not verbatim, derived

from the parvan-s rather than the Epic in Sanskrit or old Javanese prose:

(a) It is unlikely that the OJ. (Old Javanese) author used the text of the Mahābhārata as we know it. The OJ Udyogaparvan and Bhīṣmaparvan follow the Epic upto when Bhīṣma is mortally wounded, that is upto canto 13.10 in the Kakavin, while for the remaining part we do not possess any prose. As for the story there are undeniable discrepancies however there are also points where a direct relationship or at least a common source seems likely (Zoetmulder).

(b) Weighing the comparables adequately demonstrates with certainity that the first two parts of *Bhāratayuddha* are derived from O.J. Bhīṣmaparvan and Udyogaparvan (Supomo). Like the Old Javanese Udyogaparvan and Bhīṣmaparvan, Droṇaparvan, Karṇaparvan, Śalyalparvan and Sauptikaparvan also existed before the composition of the *Bhāratayuddha* in AD 1157. But unlike the O.J. Udyogaparvan and Bhīṣmaparvan, they have been lost (Supomo).

BY. In the ninth canto Śveta, the son of Virāṭa, is chosen as the first commander in chief of the Pāṇḍava army. In the battle that follows his brothers Uttara and Śaṅkha are slain. The eleventh canto deals with his attempts to avenge their death followed by his own death at the hands of Bhīṣma and in turn Virāṭa's lament. Then Dhṛṣṭadyumna is appointed commander in his place.

MBh. Dhrṣṭadyumna is appointed first commander and Śveta is rather an inconspicuous figure among the many heroes. His death shortly after that of his brother Uttarā is chronicled in adhyāya 47 and 48 and only much later in adhyāya 82 we hear of the death of Virāṭa's third son Śankha.

OJ. BhP. While in this parvan Dhrṣṭadyumna seems to hold the position of commander in chief, yet we find nonetheless that Śveta does act as *Senāpati*, as more or less reflected in a casual remark, *Samangkana kweh sang rumĕbut sangso sang Śveta Virāṭaputra: tĕkvan mara tĕlas kṛtasangaskāra inabhiṣeka senāpatya* (BhP.76). And also from the fact that after the death of Śveta, Dhṛṣṭadyumna is installed (*Bh. P.*80.5). However, there is nothing in the parvan about his brother Śankha or Virāṭa's lament.

O.J.. UdP. Śveta is not mentioned at all in the Pāṇḍavas' deliberations about the choice of a *senāpati.*

2. The author took creative liberties to insert additional passages which do not change the story but without which this work would insufficiently satisfy the traditions of the Kakavin and the essential features of Kalongōm.

a. The description of nature at the point of Kṛṣṇa's arrival in Hastinā, "the hermitages appeared to beckon him, as if impatient for his arrival. But dejected on not seeing the Pāṇḍavas, the campaka trees shed their flowers, as if bent on casting themselves into the depths of ravines. Tanjun flowers, in despair, eased themselves from the branches and hung there, trapped in a spiders web (BY.1-16).

b. The lengthy conversation between Kṛṣṇa and his host on *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* which occur in the Epic (Mahābhārata 5.90-91), but in *Bhāratayuddha*, are referred briefly in not more than two lines. Instead the poet devotes twenty-five stanzas describing the sunset, the sunrise, the moon, and the women of the inner court dallying in the garden. (BY.4.8-6.9).

c. An additional personage in this section is Bhānumatī, queen of Duryodhana, described as supreme beauty (4.7c). Bhānumatī, the name finds mention in the Mahābhārata, but as (a) a daughter of Kṛtavīrya, wife of Ahaṃyāti (b) as a daughter of Aṅgirasa, in the epic (Sorensen 1963).

d. The amply developed description of the heroic fight put by Abhimanyu, during which he succumbs under the attack of a numerically superior army (BY.13.29-35).

e. The description of the battlefield which is full of demonic overtones, on the occasion of Yudhiṣṭhira's visit to see the body of his guru Droṇa and Bhīṣma lying on his couch of arrows (BY.23.1-19). This excursion however is not featured in the Epic.

3. The authors give women a special place on the battlefield e.g. Kuntī, Virāṭa's queen, Subhadrā, Uttarā, Hiḍimbī, Draupadī, and three characters completely unknown to the Epic i.e. Kṣitisundarī, Satyavatī and her maid Sugandhikā.

a. Part one ends with the march of the two armies to the battlefield *prayāṇa.* But only the heroes of the Pāṇḍava army are enumerated. (BY.9.1-12) Draupadī also takes part in the *prayāṇa,* "Then Draupadī set out in a golden palanquin with a peacock parasol, her hair hanging loose, spattered by fine rain drops, reddish like clouds foreboding the long awaited rain of blood (enemy's)" (BY.9.8). This is in contrast to the epic, where she remains behind in *upalavya* with other ladies surrounded by her attendants (Mahābhārata.5.149-153). Also her vow that she will not tie her hair until washed by the blood of a hundred Kauravas (BY.8.6cd) does not find a parallel in the epic.

b. The Pāṇḍavas pitch a fortified camp *kuṭa* with its own palace *kraton* at Kurukṣetra where Vidura and Kuntī come to see them (BY.9.13).

c. Apart from the negligible laments of Subhadrā and Draupadī, there is no parallel in the epic whereas the laments especially those of Kṣitisundarī and Satyavatī constitute significant parts of the poem. The long passages on the death of Abhimanyu are an addition to the Epic narrative, where the Kakavin depicts the women near the body and gives a moving description of the parting between his two wives, Uttarā, who stays behind because she is with child (BY.14.4-5) and Kṣitisundarī who follows him in death (15.4-18). In the context of Satyavatī's lament over Śalya as also of the maid, see pt. no. 6c(BY.44.15-18). Also featured are Virāṭa and his queen's lament at the loss of their three sons (BY.12.1-4) and Hiḍimbīs mourning of her son Ghaṭotkaca's death (BY.19.13-19).

d. Further these are not the only women present, as is evident from Śalya's camp for instance, "The arrangement of the encampment was such that it seemed that the palace of Madra had been transported there, because all the dignitaries and women of the inner court *wwaṅ i dalĕm* had gathered" (BY.36.8ab).

4. There are also other instances of persons who do not find mention in the Sanskrit text or make their appearance in the Kakavin under a name different from the Sanskrit Epic. For instance,

(a) The four horses that draw Kṛṣṇa's chariot are Valāhaka, Abhrapuṣpa, Sukanṭha and Senya (BY.14.15). In comparison the horses are called Balāhaka, Meghapuṣpa (*abhra=megha*, 'cloud'), Sugrīva (*kaṇṭha* = *grīvā*, neck) and *Sainya* respectively in the Mahābhārata. 7.56.35.

(b) Sātyaki vanquishes the famed enemy Toyasandha the prince of Kāmboja and a hero named Ambisa (BY.15.33c). Toyasandha is a synonym for Jalasandha, ruler of Magadha killed by Sātyaki in the corresponding passage of the Mahābhārata (7.91.29-50). (Kāmbojavara and Ambisa, see Kern.1873.n.244))

(c) Bhīma kills Śrutāyudha (BY.16.2), instead in Mahābhārata. 7.67.51-54 he is killed by his own mace as he hurls it against Kṛṣṇa, who is at that time unarmed.

(d) There is no mention of Sātyaki's nine sons (By.17.1c) in the corresponding passage of the Epic (Mahābhārata. 7.131-32). Instead he is said to have ten sons who were killed by Bhūriśrava in the earlier part of the war (Mahābhārata. 6.70.11-22; BhP.103.4-12).

(e) The four rākṣasas slain by Ghaṭotkaca (BY.18.6-10) Alĕmbana, Alĕmbusa, Alāyudha and Śṛṅgavan. Only the second and third are mentioned in the Mahābhārata.

(f) Aśvatthāmā takes refuge in the shrine of Vāgīśvara (BY.20.21). In the corresponding passage after Aśvatthāmā fled, he met the sage Vyāsa *sarasvatyāvāsam Vyāsam.*

(g) The serpent Adravalīka (BY.31.13) is named Aśvasena in the Mahābhārata. 8.66 (Hazeau.1898).

5. Sometimes the story is presented in such an obscure, ambiguous way, or with total lack of any apparent motivation

that only comparisons with the Epic can elucidate it.

(a) BY 20.17 describes Aśvatthāmā's attack on the Pāṇḍavas to avenge the death of his father Droṇa, and the terrifying power of his weapon Nārāyaṇa. The text continues,

"Then Kṛṣṇa ordered the heroes to descend from their chariots and to remain on the ground for a while. All obeyed immediately except Bhīma, who remained in his car, and that was the reason why swarms of arrows (emanating from Nārāyaṇa) attacked him from all sides. Pārtha came to the rescue with his Varuṇa, and the Nārāyaṇa was swept away and vanished. Aśvatthāmā fired another arrow, called Tejomaya, and without delay Pārtha and Kṛṣṇa seized Bhīma and pulled him down to the ground. The rage of the Brahmin's son increased as he saw his missile disappear without a trace."

This passage bewilders by a variety of acts but is understood when we read in the Epic that Nārāyaṇa is effective only against those who are engaged in active fight and can be used only once. Kṛṣṇa knows this and therefore orders the Pāṇḍavas to lay down their weapons for a while and descend from their chariots. Bhīma, who disobeys is surrounded by the Nārāyaṇa fire. It is not extinguished until Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna force him down.

(b) Similarly, another puzzling detail is found in BY 19.7. The death of Ghaṭotkaca owed to Karṇa, gives rise to violent grief among the Pāṇḍavas. "Only Kṛṣṇa was obviously glad and embraced Arjuna. Then the latter's sorrow at the death of the young warrior disappeared". Here again the explanation is contained in the Epic. Kṛṣṇa exults because Karṇa has been forced to use Indra's lance, with which as per his promise to Duryodhana, he was determined to kill Arjuna (Mahābhārata.VII.155-58). Deprived of it, now it is possible for Karṇa himself to be killed instead.

In addition to this, Kṛṣṇa is said to have desired the death of Ghaṭotkaca, who was the enemy of the Brahmins (his *rākṣasa* nature, inherited from his mother does not belie itself), and Kṛṣṇa would himself have killed him if Karṇa had not done so. It was in fact Kṛṣṇa who had proposed sending Ghaṭotkaca into battle to fight Karṇa, which is clearer in the Epic (Mahābhārata.VII.173) than in BY. (BY.17.11-12).

(c) The following episode does not truly qualify the above category however the variation is interesting: Arjuna severs Jayadratha's head and on cue from Kṛṣṇa continues to fire it with arrows, which carry it to Jayadratha's father, who is in meditation, purpose of which being that if his son's head is severed, it should multiply hundred fold and route the enemy totally. But instead it falls on the very father's lap and so it remained unchanged. BY.16.7. In contrast, as per the Mahābhārata.7.146. Jayadratha's father Vṛddhakṣatra had cursed that the man who would cause the fall of his son's head, would suffer his own head fall and crack into a hundred pieces. When Arjuna severs Jayadratha's head, Kṛṣṇa causes it to fall into Vṛddhakṣatra's lap, which further falls on the earth. As per his own curse, Vṛddhakṣatra's head breaks into pieces (Sorensen.1960.762).

6. The close relationship between the Epic and the Kakavin as regards the story, applies upto the end of the Karṇaparvan, the eighth book of the Mahābhārata. Here I would like to quote *rĕmpak sukī ni ratha Karṇa kudanya rimpuṅ ndah śāpa ṅūni mara rakva tinūt nikāṅde* BY.31.22. Comparably MBh.8.66.41.1122-23 recounts that due to a Brahmin's curse *vipraśāpa* his chariot would get stuck and because of Paraśurāma's curse, he would be unable to recall the mantras to invoke his mighty weapon (Karṇa's weapon finds mention as *vijayadhanu anindya-sādhana* BY.21.5). A more detailed account of what led to the curse occurs in the Mahābhārata. 8.29.30ff.

However, with the beginning of the Śalyaparvan, the situation changes completely.

(a) The conversation between Duryodhana and Śakuni (BY.33.4-34.4) occurs in the corresponding passage of the Epic but between Duryodhana and Kṛpa (MBh.9.3-4) it took place in the Mahābhārata.

(b) There is no parallel to the quarrel between Śalya and Aśvatthāmā and the latter leaving the battlefield not wanting to fight under Śalya's command (BY.35.1-14). On the contrary it is Aśvatthāmā in the Epic, who proposes Śalya as the commander in chief (MBh.9.5.18ff).

(c) There is no mention of Nakula's visit to his uncle Śalya, who tells his nephew of Paśupati's decree that he will die through (Yudhiṣṭhira's) *sudhīrakādgaṅ pustaka* (BY.36.17) What is therefore required is the origin of "*ṅkā Śrī Kṛṣṇa kumon ri Dharmasuta Pustaka* (*Kalimahoṣadha*) *lĕpasakĕna*" (BY.42.5) (Mahabharata: with *śakti*, 'spear, lance').

(d) Śakuni is killed by Bhīma but in the Epic he is killed by Sahadeva. (BY.43.1-7).

(e) In particular, from the romantic episode of Śalya and his wife Satyavatī to their last encounter, and Satyavatī's final visit to the battlefield in search of her husband have no parallels, "Everything she saw and heard was terrifying and repulsive, yet she forced herself to go on, for she was eager to find and see Śalya's body with her own eyes. She was utterly exhausted, her feet were trembling, and time and time again she stumbled on slimy corpses and fell on her knees. Her deep sorrow became intolerable, and as there seemed nothing else to wait for, she hurriedly prepared herself for death. She drew the dagger she had been holding all this while, which sparkled now taken from its sheath. She then threw herself fearlessly on it, and her blood gushed forth like red mineral" (BY 44.2-45.2). Cantos 32 to 45 are a poem as though independent of the Epic which Panuluh qualifies as *Khyātīn Bhāratayuddha Śalyavadha* (BY.52.10).

7. From the 46th canto onwards the main features of the story are to be found corresponding to the Epic with the exception of:

(a) The curse (BY.50.1), which induces Kṛṣṇa to send the Pāṇḍavas away from the camp on the fatal night.

(b) BY.51.1-12 is a passage that does not correspond to the Epic. However two events are known from other parts of the Epic. Firstly (stanza 8-10), the story of the churning of the ocean is derived from the *samudra manthana* (Ap.31.9ff) and secondly (stanza 11-12), the power given to Draupadī to see what had become of all those dead, is reminiscent of the same power given by Vyāsa to Sañjaya (Mahābhārata.6.2).

c. In view of Panuluh's independence of the epic in the preceding cantos, it is remarkable that this final part in reference to the combat between Bhīma and Duryodhana, should contain two lines which are directly based on a verse from the Mahābhārata:

BY.49.1:
kunang niyata jihmayuddha pangaran ri sira n alaga tan panūt krama
soyudhana sirêki vīra ṛjuyuddha saphala mati śūra torasih.

MBh.IX.3366 (Adhy.60.27-28):
hatvā dharmeṇa rājānaṃ dharmātmānaṃ Suyodhana
jihmayodhīti loke 'smin khyātiṃ yāsyati Pāṇḍavaḥ
Duryodhana 'pi dharmātmā gatim yāsyati śāśvatim
ṛjuyodhī hato rājā Dhārtarāṣṭro narādhipaḥ.

The words *jihmayuddha* 'unfair in fight' and *ṛjuyuddha* 'fair in fight' referring to Bhīma and Duryodhana respectively, also occur in Śalyaparvan *jihmayodhi* and *ṛjuyodhi* (Mahābhārata.9.59.23 and 24). But have not been found elsewhere in Old Javanese texts. Their appearance here cannot be attributed to mere coincidence. It does not strictly prove however, that Panuluh must have known the Śalyaparvan in its entirety. A collection of Mahābhārata quotations after the manner of the *Sāra-samuccaya* (Raghu Vīra) would be sufficient explanation.

HIGHLIGHTS

havighanam astu, om avighnām astū namaśiḍĕm, avighanam

astu namaśiḍěm,
avighnam astuti namaśiḍěm, titi śargah.

1. *Maṅgala* addressed to king Jayabhaya, and the chronogram (1.1-6).

2. Kṛṣṇa represents the Pāṇḍavas at Gajāhvaya in negotiations with the Kauravas concerning their claim to part of the kingdom (1.7-16).

3. Duryoddhana is cautioned by Duḥśāsana, Śakuni and particularly Karṇa, who incites them by saying that Kṛṣṇa must be considered an enemy. (4.6).

4. Duryoddhana and his supporters decline a peaceful settlement and plan to kill Kṛṣṇa. Apprised of their intention by Sātyaki, Kṛṣṇa is enraged and manifests himself in his terrifying form, "as Viṣṇu splendid in his *trivikrama* form embodying the three worlds" (7.4-8.6).

5. On his departure Kṛṣṇa urges Karṇa to side with the Pāṇḍavas, instead he desires to go forth into battle starting on the fifth month while the moon is bright *mamvītaněṅ kalima tovi sěděṅ tumaṅgal,* so that they finish on the fifteenth of the dark half of the month *rapvan ma-sampunan i pañcadaśīnya Kṛṣṇa* (8.11-12). Later Kuntī implores Karṇa, the *arkaputra* addressing him as Kaunteya, but without success. (8.11-16).

6. Description of the Pāṇḍavas *prayāṇa* including Draupadī (9.1-12).

7. The Pāṇḍavas pitch a fortified camp *kuṭa* with its own *kraton* at Kurukṣetra, Vidura and Kuntī come to see them and appoint Śveta, son of king Virāṭa as the commander in chief. (9.13-16).

8. The Kauravas also having arrived, choose Bhīṣma as their general. Armies are arranged in battle array, mountain sea *wukir sāgara* for the Kauravas and thunderbolt *vajra* for the Pāṇḍavas. (10.1-11).

9. Arjuna is perturbed at having to fight his own kin but Kṛṣṇa reminds him of his Kṣatriya dharma. The battle begins; two of Virāṭa's sons fall, Śaṅkha by the Brahmin and Uttara

by Śalya. Their brother Śveta fights like a lion to avenge them inflicting heavy losses on the Kauravas but is killed by Bhīṣma. Lament of king Virāṭa and his queen. The bodies are cremated at night (10.12-12.4).

10. Dhṛṣṭadyumna, son of king Drupada, takes over as commander. Next day both armies are in the Garuḍa array. Bhīṣma performs miracles of prowess. Arjuna's son Iravan from Ulupī falls in battle against Śṛṅgī, an accomplished demon. Kṛṣṇa as Arjuna's charioteer aimes his cakra at Bhīṣma, but is restrained by Arjuna to hold is pledge of not participating actively. Bhīṣma signals Yuddhiṣṭhira reminding him of what he had told him earlier that he would not defend himself against Śikhaṇḍi. Arjuna under cover from Śikhaṇḍi fatally wounds Bhīṣma with his arrows. Both sides gather around his couch of arrows *śaratalpa* to pay homage though Bhīṣma is half-hearted. Droṇa is chosen as the next commander. The army resumes the fight in elephant battle-order. Bhagadatta dies at the hands of Arjuna (12.5-13.16).

11. Arjuna and Bhīṣma are lured away from the central battlefield. Abhimanyu rushes upon the enemy and penetrates the *cakravyūha* and fights his way to where Duryoddhana is standing. The Pāṇḍavas are restrained by Jayadratha from reaching Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu is outdone by the superior number and succumbs. (13.19-35).

12. Abhimanyu's mother Subhadrā, wives Uttarā (king Virāṭa's daughter) and Kṣitisundarī (Kṛṣṇa and Rukminī's daughter) and Yuddhiṣṭhira surround the body of the young hero. Arjuna and Bhīṣma return. Arjuna is inconsolable and is about to seek death in battle but is restrained by Kṛṣṇa. Yuddhiṣṭhira explaines, "your son was in difficulty the moment he penetrated the *cakravyūha*." Arjuna takes a solemn oath to avenge his son's death or else perish himself in fire. He discusses with Kṛṣṇa the way to achieve this. Kṛṣṇa invites him to ride in his chariot drawn by incomparable horses who cannot be harmed by even divine weapons etc. When they prepare themselves for Devapūjā and medidate

sampun maṅkana sira saprahāra yogī (15.1d), Rudra appears and predicts Jayadratha's death with the divine weapon of Paśupati. (14.1-15.3).

13. Kṣitisundarī takes leave of Uttarā to follow her husband in death. Uttarā stays behind as she is eight month's pregnant. Kṣiti bids her to take the pen and paper *tanah* and *karas* from the offerings to give them to a poet to write her story and hang it up in a mahantĕn; She will be with her in the thunder and clouds, in the moon and the *pudak*. Uttarā on her part implores her to her lament to Abhimanyu; on their re-descent for another incarnation she will be the *cātaka* and the weeping *cukur*. (15.4-18).

14. Battle ensues. Arjuna destroys Duryodhana's chariot forcing him to retreat. Sātyaki vanquishes the famed enemy Toyasandha the prince of Kāmboja and a hero named Ambisa. Severe combat started between Bhūriśrava and Sātyaki. Just as Sātyaki is about to be defeated with the former's sword Candrahāsa, Arjuna shoots off Bhūriśrava's arm and Sātyaki kills him with his sword Manekabhāma. Thus Bhūriśrava died a wretched death (15.4-43).

15. Arjuna and Bhīṣma spread destruction and death. Kṛṣṇa sees they are exhausted, Kṛṣṇa raises his *cakra* to the sun, and as if by magic the *cakra* obscures the sun with thick clouds. The Kauravas are tricked into believing its night and challenge Arjuna to throw himself in the fire in accordance with his oath. Taking advantage of the dark Arjuna succeeds in killing Jayadratha. Duryodhana blames Droṇa for this outcome of events. Droṇa rejoins that no one is a match for Arjuna and that he should now look for someone else to lead. Karṇa who so far had abstained from the battle is willing to carry on for him. (16.1-11).

16. Prātipeya, father of Bhūriśrava attacks Sātyaki but is slain by Bhīṣma. Quarrel between Karṇa and Kṛpa, supported by his nephew Aśvatthāmā. Karṇa takes the field and kills many. Yuddhiṣṭhira urges Arjuna to contest him, but he declines in favour of Ghaṭotkaca, who at night with his magic

skills, is a bettter match against Karṇa's tricks. Ghaṭotkaca kills four rākśasas. Karṇa smashes Ghatoṭkaca's chariot but he continues to fight from the air. Finally an arrow hits his chest. He sweeps down to attack Karṇa, who jumps off the chariot. Ghaṭotkaca dies in Karṇa's chariot. (17.1-19.6).

17. Intense grief spreads amongst the Pāṇḍavas with Kṛṣṇa excepted. Hidimbā takes leave of Draupadī and flings herself into the pyre. Droṇa kills Drupada's three grandsons, Drupada himself and the king of Virāṭa. Dhrṣṭadyumna swears vengeance. (19.7-25).

18. Droṇa is invincible. Kṛṣṇa suggests a ruse to throw Droṇa off guard by falsely proclaiming Aśvatthāmā has fallen. At first it is declined on moral grounds. However when Bhīma kills an elephant with the same name as Droṇa's son, all shout Aśvatthāmā is dead. Even the righteous Yudhiṣṭhira allows himself to become party to the deceit by affirming only half of he truth. Droṇa swoons and Dhrṣṭadyumna cuts of his head. In turn Aśvatthāmā avenges his father's death and kills a large number of the enemy with his arrow Nārāyaṇa. Arjuna is full of sorrow and shame at his guru's death and refuses to fight Aśvatthāmā, but Bhīma has no such qualms. Meanwhile a violent quarrel arises between Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Sātyaki, who reproaches the former for his lack of courage against Aśvatthāmā. They are separated by Kṛṣṇa and Yudhiṣṭhira (20.1.16).

19. Aśvatthāmā devastates the opponents with his Nārāyaṇa arrows. Kṛṣṇa orders the Pāṇḍavas to desist from further action, but Bhīṃa disobeys and is encirled by a swarm of arrows. Arjuna comes to his aid with his Varuṇa arrow which sweeps away the swarm of arrows. Aśvatthāmā then fires his celebrated arrow, Tejomaya and Bhīma is pulled off from his chariot by others. Aśvatthāmā's further attack is countered by Arjuna's invincible Brahma-arrow rendering Aśvatthāmā's weapon ineffective, who then leaves the field and retires to Vāgīśvara, a famed shrine. Description of the arena after the carnage. (20.17-25).

20. Karṇa is formally installed as commander-in-chief. The ceremony is attended with many evil-boding portents. Many leave Hastinā to go over to the Pāṇḍavas. The Pāṇḍavas pay homage to Droṇa their guru (who is refered here as Buddharūpa Śivarūpa) and Bhīṣma on his couch of arrows. The latter exhorts them to carry on with the war as the Kauravas' defeat is predestined. (21.1-23.19).

21. Karṇa desires Śalya as charioteer, who agrees but conditionally. (25.1-4).

22. The battle begins again with Karṇa proclaiming annihilation of the Pāṇḍavas. Śalya jeers him, which Karṇa is obliged to ignore as per the conditions between them. (26.1-28.4).

23. Bhīma and Duryoddhana engage in combat. The latter retreats. Bhīma kills Duḥśāsana to avenge the insult Draupadī suffered after the game of dice in Hastinā. He redeems his pledge taken under oath that he would drink Duḥśāsana's blood. (29.1-19).

24. The crucial combat between Arjuna and Karṇa in which they exchange such destructive arrows that even the Gods implore them to abate their magic power lest the whole world perishes. Adravalīka, a gigantic serpent who is nursing a past grievance against Arjuna, decides to help Karṇa by entering his arrow but in vain. (The serpent's past grievance refers to the death of the serpent's mother at the hands of Arjuna at the time of the burning of the Khāṇḍava forest as narrated in the epic. (AdiP. 205ff; Mahābhārata.1.216.31ff). For at a sign from Śalya, Kṛṣṇa has pressed down the front part of his chariot. When Karṇa refuses any further assistance from the serpent, it alone attacks Arjuna and is killed. Arjuna smashes Karṇa's chariot. Karṇa does not retreat. Arjuna continues the onslaught with a bow charged with *mantras* and carrying the divine Paśupati-arrow imbued with the power of yoga. While Karṇa is invoking another extraordinarily powerful arrow, he is hit by Arjuna's arrow in the neck and dies. (30.1-31.25).

25. Confusion prevails amongst the Kauravas. It seemed as if the Sun God was mourning the death of the hero. (32.1-4).

26. Duryodhana realises the impossibility of winning the war by force and so asks Śakuni to devise a strategy. Due to shortage of time, he instead advises him to choose Śalya as their new commander-in-chief. (33.4-34-5).

27. Śalya declines and suggests reconciliation. Aśvatthāmā accuses Śalya of being partial to the Pāṇḍavas and treacherous conduct, which led to Karṇa's death. A quarrel ensues resulting in a violent combat, but the two are seperated by others. Aśvatthāmā refuses to take part in the battle any longer. (35.1-14).

28. After his installation as chief Śalya goes to camp quarters which are "like the kraton of Madrapura transferred to the battlefield". Śalya's nephew Nakula visits him on the advice of Kṛṣṇa. He is reluctant to pick up arms against his uncle and would rather die there and then at Śalya's hands. Śalya expresses helplessness on account of his pledge to Duryodhana and his Kṣatriya Dharma. However he puts his life in the hands of Nakula with however one request to Yudhiṣṭhira as his opponent. As Paśupati had ordained that he would be slain by one who is lawful etc and who steadfastly uses the book as his sword to destroy the six inner enemies, by means of which he would attain Rudra's heaven. (Sharada Rani: The six enemies are *lobha, moha, mada, māna, mātsarya and hiṅsā*) Nakula goes back with this message and a heavy heart. (36.1-19).

29. Śalya now goes back to his wife Satyavatī who is desolate not out of fear but at the inevitable separation that would follow her husband's death. She wants to stab herself but is restrained by Śalya. They spend the night together. Before dawn, Śalya leaves her stealthily. Without awakening her, he cuts off with his *kris* the tip of his garment on which she is lying. (37.1- 38.17).

30. The Kauravas reel under the pressure of Bhīma and

Arjuna. Śalya alone stands firm and finally uses his devastating Rudraroṣa-arrow. By momentarily stopping the fight on Kṛṣṇa's advice, the Pāṇḍavas deprive his weapon of its object, offering but a mere respite. Śalya must be defeated and only Yudhiṣṭhira can do this. Kṛṣṇa convinces the reluctant Yudhiṣṭhira of the necessity. In the encounter that follows, Yudhiṣṭhira kills Śalya with his magical book *Kalimahoṣadha* which was like a gleaming jewelled staff. (40.1-42.9).

31. Bhīma slays Śakuni and then goes in quest of Duryodhana. Meanwhile the message of Śalya's death has reached Satyavatī. She goes out to the abandoned battlefield and stabs herself on Śalya's body and so does her maid. (43.1-45.12).

32. Duryodhana is found doing penance at a river and is jeered at by Bhīma for his cowardice. He comes forward and declares that he is ready to fight them all. Kṛṣṇa prefers a single combat and leaves the choice of weapons and adversary to him. He challenges Bhīma to a club fight. Baladeva who is on a pilgrimage is informed by Nārada of the same. Baladeva returns in haste to witness the two warriors, who have learnt the use of this weapon by him. The combat remains undecided for long. On the advice of Kṛṣṇa who sees that nothing can be achieved by fair means, Arjuna signals Bhīma to hit below the belt. On cue, Bhīma shatters his thigh, thus fulfilling his oath taken before they were exiled. Besides, an ascetic Maitreya had cursed him of this eventuality (corresponds to the Mahābhārata.9.59.22-24 and further the curse refers to Āraṇyakaparvan Mahābhārata. 3.10). So did Draupadī curse with similar words. Baldeva is indignant at this foul play and is with great difficulty restrained from killing Bhīma. Kṛṣṇa spoke thus, "Bhīma will be called *jihmayuddha* and Duryodhana will be called *ṛjuyuddha* and so the latter will die a true hero" (46.1-49.2).

33. Finally when the sixth hour came and the night was still (50.9a). The sixth hour means around 3:00 am. In the

Mahābhārata it is the last night of the war i.e. the eighteenth day of the war.

34. The Pāṇḍavas celebrate their victory. Kṛṣṇa is worried about Duryodhana's words when lying mortally wounded, that he would not die until he trampled upon the heads of the five. Therefore he orders them to live with him at night and visit the holy places in atonement of their sins. Before dawn they receive tidings that Aśvatthāmā has surprised his enemies in their sleep and slain all the men including the five sons of Draupadī. They return and find women overcome by grief and Draupadī in particular is inconsolable. Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa, grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas who has appeared from the void *sakeng sūkṣma,* try in vain to soothe her. She demands the jewel worn by Aśvatthāmā on his forehead. Pāṇḍavas trace him and Bhīma is about to kill him with his club. In self defense he seizes his all destroying arrow Brahmaśiraḥ. Arjuna is levelling an arrow of the same kind (both were gifts from Droṇa), when Śiva orders them to extinguish their weapons, which are already ablaze, because it is forbidden to use them against human beings. Arjuna obeys but Aśvatthāmā is unable to extinguish the magic fire. This is convincing proof that he is inferior in power to Arjuna and is compelled to surrender his jewel. The uncontrolled arrow hits the child in Uttarā's womb, who is restored to life by Kṛṣṇa in order to become king under the name of Parikṣit in the future. Draupadī gives the jewel to Yudhiṣṭhira, who as king takes up residence in Indraprastha. (49.3-51.32).

35. Firstly (51.8-10) the story of the churning of the ocean and secondly (51.11-12) the power given to Draupadī to see what had become of all those dead.

36. When Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas have gone back to heaven and kali era has finally arrived, Viṣṇu is downhearted and moved to compassion. He therefore descended to the world to become protector of the island and restored the kingdom. In the past he was called Lord Kṛṣṇa and had

succeeded in gaining victory in battle. Accordingly, he is called His Majesty Lord Jayabhaya, famed throughout the world. He is Viṣṇu incarnate, one in essence with the Lord. In short no one opposes Lord Hari Jayabhaya who rules in Daha. (52.3-9).

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5

Some Reflections of the Mahābhārata in Japanese Literature

ANITA KHANNA

The presence of Indian epics in Japanese literature in the past was facilitated by the advent of Buddhism there. At various stages of its development, Japan has assimilated the elements of different cultures, like that of Korea, China, India, Europe and America. In ancient times, in particular, the influence of neighbouring China had been predominant as the Chinese models were imbibed in every sphere for nation building. This included the fields of religion and philosophy too. At that time Buddhism along with Confucianism and Taoism flourished in China. As pointed by Paul Rozer, "A careful and catholic examination of Chinese written materials from the fourth century onwards, reveal an increasingly explicit preoccupation with Buddhist themes."[1] This spread itself to the neighbouring Japanese territory also.

Originally Japan's native religion was simply animism which was based on nature worship, without having any elaborate rituals or religious practices. So Buddhism aroused the curiosity of the aristocracy, and the Japanese emperor upon receiving the image of the Buddha along with some scriptures and other articles of worship was especially impressed by the splendour and grandeur of the religion. It is well known that eventually it resulted in keen interest and avid adaptation of every aspect associated with Chinese Buddhism.

In the Nihonshoki (The Chronicles of Japan, AD 720) it is stated that in the thirteenth year of the rule of Emperor Kinmei (AD 552), in the tenth month, the King of Kudara, a Korean Kingdom, sent an image of the Buddha and some scriptures to the Emperor. The letter accompanying it extolled the benefits of worshipping the Buddha and faith in Buddhism. The Emperor gave it to a minister of Soga clan to install and preserve it. But there was a strong opposition by the Mononobe clan, which detested the worship as an insult to the native gods. As a result the acceptance of Buddhism was delayed by three years. When the resistance subsided, the minister Soga no Iname reiterated in support of Buddhism, "These gods are venerated in all the Western countries. How could Japan refuse to accept it?" From China, Buddhism came not only with its texts and literature, its priests and its new doctrine, but was also accompanied by the elements of some specialized techniques, art and architecture, till then unknown in Japan.

With regard to the development and spread of Buddhism in Japan, the foremost name which is upheld as the reincarnation of the Buddha of Japan[2] is of Prince Shotoku (AD 574-622) whose actual name was Umayado no Oji. In the work *Muromachijidai Monogatari Taisei* (Full volumes of the tales of Muromachi period), in the section based on the life of the Buddha i.e. *Shaka no Honi* (The life of Śākyamuni), Śākyamuni Buddha professes that he will be reborn in the Islands of East and shall be named Prince Shotoku. Prince Shotoku was the second son of Emperor Yomei and became the prince regent to his aunt empress Suiko. In his maiden work, *The Constitution of Seventeen Articles*, he appealed to the countrymen to have faith in the three treasures of the Buddha and proclaimed Buddhism as the state religion of Japan. He also wrote commentaries on the Chinese translations of the three scriptures viz. *Śrī-Māla* (Shomangyo), *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa* (Yuimagyo), and *Lotus Sūtra* (Hoke kyo), the last being became the most widely revered scripture in Japan.

Regarding the translations of Indian classics in Japanese it is said that, "Right from the Vedānta and the Upaniṣad, on to the Kāmasūtra have been translated in Japanese. The *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā*, the *Ṛtusaṃhāra* and the *Meghadūta* by Kālidāsa, the *Mṛcchkaṭika* by Śūdraka, works of Bhartṛhari, the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, the *Pañcatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Arthśāstra* by Kauṭilya, the *Manusmṛti* and the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* are available in Japanese translations. The Bhagavadgītā too has been translated to Japanese. Yet the complete translations of the two Indian epics viz. the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa are not available as yet.[3]

In such case the influence of the Mahābhārata in Japan could be traced to the presence of identical motifs in the Buddhist literature that would have travelled to Japan in the garb of Buddhist literature. Possibly due to the universal appeal in ethical discourse, some of these have become equally popular in Japan as well. It is a well known fact that the epic of the Mahābhārata is full of stories about the creation of universe, legends associated with sages, places, stories on morality, wisdom etc. Mostly these have no relation with the main plot that revolves around the enmity between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. In this regard as pointed,

> ". . . in case of many moral stories of the Mahābhārata one could be at first inclined to trace them back to Buddhist sources. On a closer observation it will become clear that they could have been drawn from that fountain of popular stories which was equally at the disposal of Brahmins, Buddhists and other sects . . . it is certain that as early as at around the time of Buddha (i.e. fifth century BC) there must have been already an exhaustible stock of stories in prose and verse, ākhyāna, itīhāsas, Purāṇa and gāthās–as a sort of common literary property from which the Buddhists, Jainas as well as epic poets have drawn material..[4]

Like this if we take a look at the Jātakas there are some titles and plots that could be associated with the Mahābhārata. The best example is the Jātaka (AD 545) titled as, "Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka" in which the wise minister Vidhurapaṇḍita of the King Dhanañjaya of Kuru Kingdom, residing in the city of Indapatta appears to be the prototype of Vidura of the Mahābhārata. Regarding this long Jātaka in six sections Winternitz said that it is a real epic in six sections. Likewise the Jātaka no. 7, Kaṭṭhahari Jātaka is similar to the story of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in the Mahābhārata. The Śivi Jātaka(499) too refers to the story of King Śivi as found in the Mahābhārata.

Thus despite no direct reference to the Mahābhārata, there are adaptations of some themes as well as narratives on influences on styles of discourse. With this background, we can narrow down on themes common to both i.e. the epic and Buddhist tradition, in order to investigate how these have been adapted in Japanese art and literature.

Since the Buddhist monks came from various classes and sections of our society and different regions, it is natural to presume that while preaching the doctrine they made use of the local folklore, legends, beliefs and tales popular in the respective regions. Eventually this would have resulted in the dissemination of identical themes to different spheres. Moreover in China too, the popularity and adaptation of certain motifs would have facilitated the dissemination of these to Korean Kingdoms and Japan, due to the active exchange among the three. In China some of the Japanese scholars came in contact with Indian monks living there, and one of them named Bodhisena came in contact with Kobo Taishi (monk Kukai). He visited Japan and lived in the temple Daianji in Nara. There he taught Sanskrit to the Japanese monks. He worked as the Head Priest in the ceremony of installation of the colossal image of Vairochana Buddha (Dainichi nyorai) in Todaiji temple in Nara, erected by Emperor Shomu in 752.

Similarities in Textual Traditions

1. The style of dialogues in unfolding a narrative

The style of unfolding the theme through dialogues by posing questions and riddles is seen in the Japanese literary works of ancient and medieval period. A glaring example is philosophical work of *Sangoshiki* by monk Kukai known as Kobo Taishi, in which the discourse unfolds through the conversation between a Buddhist, a Taoist and a Confucian scholar. This style has fully matured in the genre of historical novel (Rekishi monogatari). In the work *Okagami* (the large mirror) of this genre, two old men and one young Samurai, while seated under a Pipal tree in Unrin-in temple in Kyoto, amidst a Buddhist ambience talk about the affairs of the most prominent and powerful aristocrats of the time, the Fujiwara family .

Also in Zen Buddhism the typical discourse pattern is *Koan* in which the contents unfold in a dialogue form between the master and the disciples. This style is seen to be already fully explored not only in the Mahābhārata but in Buddhist literature as well. The questions posed to the Pāṇḍava brothers while they are wandering in search of water, by a Yakṣa in possession of the pond are famous. It contributed not only to the evolution of the story but also the discourse. For example:

> Yakṣa: "Tell me Oh King...does Brahminhood lie in birth, in the way of life, in Vedic study or in scholarship?"
> Yudhiṣṭhira: "...neither birth nor study of the Veda nor scholarship can give a right to Brahminhood. Only a good way of life can be the basis of Brahminhood."[5]

In Buddhist scriptures also this style is widely prevalent. In each Jātaka tale the story of present begins with a dialogue between Buddha and his company and concludes in the same style. The style of solving the riddles through dialogues there by demonstrating practical wisdom is present in Japanese works and folklore particularly after the advent of Buddhism in Japan. The commonly found themes are:

- How to distinguish between the parent, child, elder brother and a younger brother of a family of identical looking colts/snakes.
- How to distinguish between the tip and rear part of a lacquered stick
- How to make a rope from ash
- How to thread a crooked trumpet shell
- How to weigh an elephant

This style of evolving discourse through the dialogues as well as posing difficult questions and riddles has come to be an integral part of Japanese prose styles that was not prevalent in the period before Buddhism. The latter trend is seen not only in folklore but also in the Monogatari works as well in the form of the riddles or difficult tasks assigned to the suitors.

2. Literary themes

The most popular theme that is widely adapted in Japan is the legend of Ṛsyaśṛṅga that is also found in the Mahābhārata (Tīrthayātrā Parvan) besides the Rāmāyaṇa (Bālakāṇḍa), Jātaka stories Alambuṣa (523), Nalīnikā (526) Mahāvastu (vol. 3). In the Mahābhārata the theme is not a part of the main plot but appears in the form of a side story as a quote from the Rāmāyaṇa, which in turn is given as a quote from Pūraṇas. He is a ṛṣi born of a doe that grows up in seclusion that he has never seen any woman or even man besides his father, who was a holy man himself. Due to some transgression by the king of Aṅga, there was a severe drought in his kingdom and people suffered greatly. Then it was suggested by the wise and holy men that the situation could be averted if the holy sage Ṛṣyaśṛṅga steps on their land. With the help of some courtesans the sage is allured to the land. He then marries the king's daughter.

In the Chinese rendering of this legend as a part of Buddhist literature, the name of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is translated as a Hermit with a horn (Ikkaku sennin, Ekaṣṛṅga), and this has been taken literally in Japan. So in Japanese renderings of the theme, mostly the sage Ikkaku Senin is portrayed to be having a horn on his forehead. In Japan it is also associated with the theme of heterogeneous parentage found in Japanese folklore on one hand and the fall from grace of an ascetic on the other, in order to condemn woman as a distraction in the religious pursuits of holy men . The latter is found in Noh play *Ikkakusennin*, Kabuki play *Narukami* and legends of Kumei sennin (Asetic Kumei). Kume Sennin is listed in the thirty seven ascetics of Japan who lived in Nara where his temple Kumei dera is still present. He was an ascetic of a great order who lost his divine powers on being distracted by a woman but could regain it.

3. Common Themes

One of the many common themes of the Mahābhārata in the Japanese tradition is the story of the giant Bakāsura. It has a Japanese counterpart in the name of Shuten Doji. A similar motif is found in Japanese mythology as the story of slaying of eight headed serpent by Susan no Omikoto, the wind god. However even closer prototype of this motif is the giant Shuten Doji who dwelt on Ibuki mountain or Oeyama mountain. He would appear in the ancient capital of Kyoto and attacked the women. The Emperor sent a general named Minamoto no Raiko and the demon is slain by the warrior hero just like Bhīma does in the Mahābhārata to Bakāsura in order to save the daughter of a Brahmin who was to be sacrificed.

The legend of Fairy Maiden (Hagoromo) is well known in Japan as a Noh play. It is based on the story of celestial maiden that descends down for bathing in the pond Mānasarovara. Her feathered robe is stolen by a youth which compel her to live on earth as his wife. She stays on until the day she discovers her robe hidden by the man. The climax is the divine dance which she performs after wearing her feather rob (Hagoromo) ,before departing from the human world. It could be said to have been inspired by the story of Śakuntalā in Ādiparvan as well as Urvaśī .

In the final analysis it could be pointed out that initially these motifs found in the Mahābhārata would have travelled to Japan in the garb of Buddhist literature in the form of Jātaka, Avadāna, legends etc. and blended with the native folk elements, which in due course of time resurfaced in a completely Japanized manner. Yet a discerning scholar, aware of the original text can clearly identify and draw parallels between the two.

NOTES

1. Paul Rouzer, 'Early Buddhist Kanshi', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 2004, pp. 432.
2. Shaka no honji in *Muromachimonogatari* Taisei, Iwanami
3. Prof. Satya Bhushan Verma, *Rāmcharitmānas kā Japani Anuwaad*
4. Maurice Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature,*Vol.II, Motilal Banarasidas
5. Ibid

6

Was Draupadī ever sought to be Disrobed?

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

Cherchez la femme could well describe the mainspring of action of the world's greatest epics: the elopement of Helen burnt the topless towers of Ilium; the rape of Brunhild destroyed the Burgundians; golden Laṅkā went up in flames because of the abduction of Sītā; the flower of Bhārata's Kṣatriyas drowned in blood because Draupadī was molested in public. The gambling match in the Sabhāparvan of the Mahābhārata is stamped indelibly on popular memory not so much because Śakuni cheated the Pāṇḍavas of their entire possessions, but for a horripilating incident that remains unique in world literature.

Yudhiṣṭhira having staked and lost their common wife, Queen Draupadī, she was dragged into the gaming hall under Duryodhana's orders and sought to be stripped by Duḥśāsana at Karṇa's behest (II.61.35-38). Karṇa argued that the gods ordained only one husband for a woman while Draupadī was bound to many and was, therefore, a *bandhakī* (prostitute). Hence, there was nothing wrong in bringing a public woman—whether clad in a single cloth or naked—into the assembly hall. It was Karṇa who asked Duḥśāsana, *pāṇḍavānām ca vāsāṃsi draupadyāś cāpyupāhara*, "Strip the

Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī of their garments!" (II.61.38). Hearing this, the Pāṇḍavas cast off their *uttarīya* (upper garments). Duḥśāsana began to pull at Draupadī's single cloth in the very midst of the assembly hall, with everyone watching. As her husbands sat silent, she appealed to Kṛṣṇa who miraculously came to her rescue, preserving her modesty by providing an unending stream of cloth to cover her.

There are two questions here: was there a miraculous intervention by Kṛṣṇa to preserve Draupadī's modesty; and was there any attempt to strip her naked? The first is important because the Critical Edition (CE) rejects the celebrated passage as an interpolation, the evidence of the manuscripts being "entirely conclusive" according to the editor. The text, as presented here, has neither any prayer by Draupadī to Kṛṣṇa, nor any explanation of the miracle of endless garments. The editor, Edgerton, writes, 'It is apparently implied (though not stated) that cosmic justice automatically, or "magically" if you like, prevented the chaste Draupadī from being stripped in public...later redactors felt it necessary to embroider the story.'[1] This is how the text reads in the van Buitenen's translation of the CE (II.61)[2]:

> "40. Then Duḥśāsana forcibly laid hold of Draupadī's robe, O king, and in the midst of the assembly began to undress her.
>
> 41. But when her skirt was being stripped off, lord of the people, another similar skirt appeared every time.
>
> 42. A terrible roar went up from all the kings, a shout of approval, as they watched that greatest wonder on earth."

In the variant recensions, Draupadī calls out to Govinda, Kṛṣṇa and "Gopījanapriya", the last epithet indicating a post-*Harivaṁsa* addition by a poet familiar with Kṛṣṇa's childhood dalliance with the milkmaids of Vrindāvana, noted as far back as in 1886 by Bankimchandra Chatterjee in his masterly sifting of fact from fable in *Kṛṣṇa Caritra.*[3] In the Vulgate, Kṛṣṇa springs up from his bed in Dvārakā and rushes on foot, deeply moved by Draupadī's appeal which reaches him telepathically. This recurs when she, faced with Durvāsā's untimely demand for food in the forest, invokes Kṛṣṇa. Referring to these two passages Sukthankar, the General Editor of the CE, comments, "They undoubtedly represent a later phase of Kṛṣṇa worship."[4]

Regarding the second question, to get a correct picture of the situation it is necessary to clarify what Draupadī was wearing. As she is dragged from the inner apartments, Draupadī appeals to Duḥśāsana to refrain (II.60.25), as she is menstruating (*rajasvalāsmi*) and is clad in just a single cloth (*ekañca vāso*). Van Buitenen's "skirt", therefore, is gratuitous while his "robe" is the correct translation of *vasana* in II.61.40-41 and consistent with II.60.25. Duḥśāsana responds that regardless of whether she is menstruating, wearing a single cloth (*ekāmbarā*) or none (*vivastrā*), she is their prize and their slave, "And one lechers with slaves as the fancy befalls!" (60.27). As she is shaken about by him, there is a reference to half of her cloth slipping (*patitārdhavastrā* 60.28), which van Buitenen turns into "her half skirt drooping". She pleads with Duḥśāsana again, "Don't render me nude, do not debase me!" (*mā māṃ vivastrāṃ kṛdhi mā vikārṣīḥ*, 60.30). When she is dragged into the assembly hall, Bhīma notices that her upper cloth is slipping (*strastottarīya*, 60.47). The painting commissioned specially for the CE shows, in the background, the Pāṇḍavas bare-bodied and Arjuna with his back to the scene, sitting fully naked; in the foreground Duḥśāsana pulls at a single cloth wrapped around Draupadī. It is not a skirt-cum-stole ensemble, but a single cloth whose upper part covers the torso, as the *sari* does.

How Draupadī was saved is hinted at in verse 544* in the footnotes of the CE, which might be the oldest interpolation:

"Yājñasenī cried out for rescue to Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Hari and Nara. Then Dharma, hidden, the magnanimous, covered her with a multitude of garments."

This is repeated in 553*:

"Thereupon hundreds of garments of many colours and whites appeared, O lord, due to the protection of Dharma."

This refers back to II.60.13 where, when summoned to the assembly hall, Draupadī reflects, "In this world Dharma alone is supreme. Observed, he will bring peace."

The enigmatic statement gives rise to many speculations, one of which possibly led to the interpolated passage bringing in Kṛṣṇa. We also recall that the god Dharma reincarnated as Vidura, the first to protest against the dice-game and the summoning of Draupadī into the assembly hall. Does he, Dharma, clothe her? Significantly, when Kṛṣṇa reminds Sañjaya of her sufferings, he refers to her casting piteous glances all around the hall to find only *kṣattā* Vidura as her protector, *nānyaṃ kṣattturnāthamadṛṣṭaṃ kañcit*, who alone spoke in condemnation, *ekaḥ kṣattā dharmyārthaṃ bruvāṇo* (V.29.33, 34). Or shall we imagine 'Dharma' as referring to the outraged sensibilities of the assembled audience who throw off their upper garments to cover Draupadī? Ultimately, as Duḥśāsana tires, evil omens erupt—jackals howl and asses bray—whereupon Gāndhārī and Vidura succeed in persuading Dhṛtarāṣṭra to intervene.

In the course of his examination of this episode, Dr. A.Hiltebeitel[5] devotes considerable energy to establish that Kṛṣṇa's intervention to protect Draupadī's modesty is part of the original text. He marshals circumstantial evidence by way of two later references from the Udyoga Parvan in which Draupadī exhorting Keśava (V.80.26) and Kṛṣṇan speaking to Sañjaya (V.58.21) refer to her appeal, "O Govinda", for rescue. However, Hiltebeitel admits that *neither Draupadī nor Kṛṣṇa mentions the attempted stripping*. If, then, Draupadī was not being stripped, why should Kṛṣṇa have intervened with the miraculous provision of garments? Moreover, when they meet for the first time after the dice-game in forest-exile, Draupadī specifically mentions having been manhandled, *kṛṣyeta* (III.13.60), being "dragged around in their hall with my one piece of clothing" while menstruating,

> *strīdharmiṇī vepamānā śoṇitena samukṣitā/*
> *ekavastrā vikṛṣṭāsmi duḥkhitā kurusamsadi//* (III.13.68),

being "molested" *pariklíśyantīm* (III.13.107) and "laid hold of by my hair" *kacagraha-manuprāptā* (III.13.107, 109) but makes no mention of any attempt to strip her. Kṛṣṇa responds (III.14.1) that had he been present he would have prevented the fraudulent dice game, but he was far away battling Śalya who had sacked Dvārakā. He refers neither to any attempt to strip her, nor to any appeal from her reaching him—telepathically or otherwise.

Whenever Yudhiṣṭhira recounts the sufferings they have undergone, he always mentions Draupadī having been dragged by her hair, but never refers to any attempt to strip her. Quite unexpectedly, Aśvatthāmā refers to the incident in the Virāṭa Parvan while reprimanding Karṇa's boasting: "Likewise, where was the battle in which you won Kṛṣṇa? In her single garment she was dragged into the hall, miscreant, when she was in her month *ekavastrā sabhāyāṃ nītā duṣṭakarmaṇā rajasvalā!*" (van Buitenen, IV.45.11-12). In the same book, Arjuna upbraids Karṇa: "You watched how evil men molested the Princess of Pāncāla in the assembly hall *yat sabhāyāṃ sma pāncālīṃ kliśyamānāṃ durātmabhiḥ dṛṣṭabānasi*" (ibid. IV.55.4). In the Udyoga Parvan, when Kṛṣṇa mentions to Sañjaya the atrocities suffered, he only refers to Duḥśāsana improperly dragging Draupadī into the *sabhā* before elders (V.29.31,33). Yudhiṣṭhira, in his message to Duryodhana through Sañjaya, refers only to Kṛṣṇā's hair being violated in the hall, *keśeṣvadharṣayat* (V.31.16). When Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas consult before the peace-embassy (V.70-79) they do not mention avenging any attempted stripping. Of the Pāṇḍavas, Arjuna alone speaks of Draupadī's trials and this is limited to "how that fiend molested Draupadī in the middle of the hall" *parikliṣṭā* *sabhāmadhye* (V.76.18). Even when Draupadī herself, furious at everyone favouring peace, lists her sufferings ("grabbed by the hair and molested in a men's hall", *sāham keśagrahaṃ prāptā parikliṣṭā sabhāṃ gatā*) and how she invoked Govinda in her heart to save her *trāhi māmiti govinda manasā kāṃkṣito'si me* (V.80.24,26), she does not mention any attempt to strip her that should have been the climactic outrage. When Kṛṣṇa rebukes Duryodhana during the peace embassy, he refers to his abusing and maltreating (*vinikṛtā*) the queen of the Pāṇḍavas (V.126.8-9), but makes no mention of any attempt to strip her. Kuntī, listing her sorrows to Kṛṣṇa several times over, laments that her greatest sorrow is Draupadī being abused verbally and molested (*parikliṣṭā*) dragged into the *sabhā* in a single cloth while menstruating. She does not mention any attempt at stripping her daughter-in-law, which would surely have been the greater torment by far (V.88.50,56; 85-86; 135.15-18, 21). In the Karṇa Parvan verses relegated by the CE to footnotes (VIII.61.934* and 935*), when Bhīma rips off the arm Duḥśāsana boastfully displays by which he dragged Draupadī by the hair, neither refers to the grosser outrage of attempting to strip her. When Kṛṣṇa recounts Karṇa's misdeeds to goad Arjuna into attacking him, he refers to single-cloth-clad, menstruating Draupadī being summoned to the *sabhā* and mocked (VIII.67.2-3), but does not refer to his instigating any stripping, which would have surely been the most explosive charge. Even at the end of the war, when Yudhiṣṭhira provokes Duryodhana to emerge from Dvaipāyana lake, he refers to Draupadī being verbally abused and dragged (*karṣaṇena*), but speaks not a word about any attempt to strip her (IX.30.187*).

Let us now study the sequence of events, as Satya Chaitanya has brought out so clearly.[6] Immediately after Duḥśāsana failed in his attempt, 'The people shouted, "The Kauravas refuse to answer the question," and condemned Dhṛtarāṣṭra' (II.61.50). This refers to the question Draupadī put to the assembly after being dragged before them (whether Yudhiṣṭhira, having staked and lost himself, could pledge her at all, 60.44). It is a query she repeats at 62.13, but it remains unanswered till the bitter end. Strangely enough, the people neither censure the king for countenancing the attempted stripping, nor criticise Duḥśāsana for making the attempt. Even more puzzling is their voicing no astonishment at the miraculous appearance of an unending stream of cloth. Instead, Vidura's speech, which follows, states that Draupadī is awaiting a reply to her question, weeping like an orphan (61.52). Surely, Vidura would have been the first to protest against any attempt to disrobe Draupadī publicly and to extol her miraculous escape in response to her appeal to Kṛṣṇa? It is significant that he refers neither to Vikarṇa's response in support of Draupadī nor to Karṇa's direction that she should be stripped. It is as though these two speeches have not happened at all.

The sequence of events indicates that originally there was no hiatus between Draupadī's query and Vidura's exhortation to the assembly to provide an answer. When Draupadī herself speaks, after Karṇa bids Duḥśāsana take her away to the Kaurava apartments, she refers to her bewilderment at being dragged into the assembly but utters not a word about any attempt to strip her. Nor does she refer to Kṛṣṇa answering her prayers miraculously and the abject failure of the reprehensible attempt to strip her in public (62.1-14). Subsequently, disturbed by the ominous howling of beasts, when Vidura and Gāndhārī press Dhṛtarāṣṭra to intervene, neither refers to any attempted disrobing (63.24). Dhṛtarāṣṭra rebukes his son for his wicked speech to the *dharmapatnī* Draupadī, but not for any heinous attempt to strip her. The vow that Bhīma takes refers to her hair having been touched *parāmṛśya* (62.35), while Nakula's vow mentions her being verbally abused *yairvācaṃ śrāvitā rukṣāḥ* (68.44), but neither refers to any attempt to disrobe her, which would surely have been the gravest provocation for swearing vengeance. Finally, when Draupadī proceeds on exile, she is described as wearing a blood-stained cloth (70.9). If Kṛṣṇa had continuously replaced what Duḥśāsana pulled away repeatedly, why should she still be wearing this cloth stained with menstrual blood?

Satya Chaitanya points out that in the last chapter of the Sabhā Parvan Dhṛtarāṣṭra mentions what happened in the assembly hall, lamenting that they "dragged the wretched Draupadī to the middle of the hall . . . clothed in her single garment, stained with blood. . . . Duryodhana and Karṇa threw biting insults at the suffering Kṛṣṇā" (van Buitenen, II.72.12-18). There is no mention of what should have been the climactic outrage—the attempted disrobing—and its miraculous failure. Further, Dhṛtarāṣṭra tells Sañjaya (72.19-20) that the Bharata women and Gāndhārī cried out in anguish and Brahmins did not perform the *sandhyā* rituals on the day of the dice game, furious at Draupadī being dragged (*parikarṣaṇe*).[7]

There is, however, a solitary confirmation of Hiltebeitel's stance, which he has overlooked. This occurs in the Śalya Parvan (IX.58.10). Dr. John D. Smith has pointed out[8] that as "Bhīma is gloating after fulfilling his vow to overthrow Duryodhana and tread on his head" he says,

"Those who brought the menstruating Draupadī and who made her naked (*avastrām*) in the assembly—see those Dhārtarāṣṭras as slain in battle by the Pāṇḍavas because of the torture on Yājñasenī."

Smith admits, ". . . it is strange that Bhīma says this at this point and does not say anything similar after fulfilling the more relevant vow against Duḥśāsana. But again, this is what the text actually says." Dr. Smith has not noticed that in an earlier verse in the same chapter (58.4) Bhīma only refers to Draupadī being brought into the assembly hall clad in a single cloth (*Draupadīm ekavāsasam*) and mocked. The inconsistency has not been reconciled—a good instance of the editors of the CE nodding.[9]

Besides this, earlier on in the same Parvan (IX.4.16-17), Duryodhana tells Kṛpācārya that there is no point seeking peace because,

"Wearing a single cloth and covered in dust, dark Draupadī was wronged by Duḥśāsana in the middle of assembly hall under the eyes of the entire world. Even today the Pāṇḍavas still remember how she was naked (*vivasanām*) and wretched (*dīnām*); those enemy-destroyers cannot be turned from war."[10]

This is the only other instance of Duryodhana referring to Draupadī being stripped that is retained in the CE. However, the annotations reveal that other manuscripts have *vimanasā* (dejected, bewildered) instead of *vivasanā*.

No *Purāṇa*—not even the *bhakti* cult's *Bhāgavata*, nor the appendix to the epic, *Harivaṃsa*—refers to the attempted stripping. In the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which adds significant material to the Pāṇḍava story, Janamejaya only refers to Draupadī being dragged by her hair twice (IV.1.36 and 17.38) using the word *dharṣitā* (IV.1.38) which has the sense "violated" too, to describe what Kīcaka did to her. The same word is used by Yudhiṣṭhira later while giving Sañjaya his message, *keśeṣvadharṣayat* (V.31.16).

If we look to the earliest post-Mahābhārata evidence, we find that in Bhāsa's plays *Dūtavākyam* and *Dūtaghaṭotkacam* and *Ūrubhaṅgam*[11] (*c.* fourth century BC—first century AD) there is no reference to the stripping. In the former, Duryodhana displays to Kṛṣṇa a vivid painting of the dice-game showing *draupadī-keśāmbarākarṣaṇam* "Draupadī dragged by the hair and garment" (prose passage following *śloka* 6) and *draupadīṃ keśahaste gṛhītavān*, "Draupadī's hair seized by the hand" (prose passage preceding *śloka* 7). Kṛṣṇa exclaims, *draupadī-keśadharṣaṇam* "Draupadī's hair being seized/violated." In the latter, Ghaṭotkaca upbraids Duryodhana saying, *śirasi na tathā bhrātuḥ patniṃ spṛśanti niśācarāḥ*, "Nor do night-wanderers (Rākṣasas) ever touch the brother's wife on the head"[12] (*śloka* 47). In the last play, Duryodhana says, *yat kṛṣṭā karanigrahāñcitakacā dyūte tadā* *draupadī,* "I dragged Draupadī by hair in the dicing" (*śloka* 63).

The *Śiva Purāṇa* (III.19.63-66) presents a later concoction regarding the episode. The stream of garments was the result of a boon granted by Durvāsā because Draupadī had torn off a portion of her garment to cover the sage when his loincloth was carried away in the Ganga.[13] Satya Chaitanya[14] has pointed out that the *Jaiminīya Aśvamedhaparvan*, again a late work (c. 10th century AD), carries a reference to the disrobing:

"Around midnight one day, in Hastināpura, Yudhiṣṭhira thinks of Kṛṣṇa who is in Dvārakā at that time and Kṛṣṇa instantly reaches Hastināpura. Draupadī, who comes and greets Kṛṣṇa after the others have received him, says his coming like this should not surprise anyone—he has come to them like this (in their hours of need) earlier too. She mentions here two occasions when this has happened. One, when he came and saved them from Durvāsā And the other, when he appeared 'in the form of clothes in the assembly' (*vastrarūpī sabhāmadhye*)." —2.62

The internal and external evidence, therefore, indicate that the incident of attempted stripping that has ruled the popular imagination so powerfully and featured on stage, paintings, films and television as the fuse that set off the explosion destroying the Kṣatriya clans, was not part of the original text but was added later by one or more highly competent redactors. That would imply that the Critical Edition's three verses (II.61.40-42) quoted at the beginning of this paper are part of the interpolation that the editors rejected.

NOTES

1. *The Sabhaparvan* ed. Franklin Edgerton, BORI, Pune, 1944, p. xxix. All references are to the CE.
2. J.A.B. van Buitenen, *The Book of the Assembly Hall*, University of Chicago Press, 1975, p.146

3. Translated by Pradip Bhattacharya, M.P. Birla Foundation, Kolkata, 1991, pp. 113, 247.
4. V.S. Sukthankar, *On the meaning of the Mahābhārata,* Asiatic Society, Bombay 1942, xiii. n.1
5. A. Hiltebeitel: *Rethinking the Mahābhārata,* University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 246-259.
6. Satya Chaitanya, "Was Draupadī disrobed in the dice hall of Hastināpura?", www.boloji.com/hinduism/094.htm
7. Ibid.
8. Personal communication.
9. Another instance is "Maṇilura" where Arjuna-in-exile weds Chitrāngadā in the *Sabhā Parvan* becoming "Maṇipura" in the *Aśvamedha Parva* of the CE.
10. Justin Meiland, *Mahābhārata, Book Nine, Śalya, Volume One,* p.77, .Clay Sanskrit Library, New York University Press, 2005.
11. Dr K.P.A. Menon: *Complete Plays of Bhāsa,* vol. I, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1996, pp. 267, 274.
12. Ibid. pp.332.
13. S.A. Dange, *Myths from the Mahabharata,* vol. 2, p.231, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2001.
14. Ibid.

7

Computational Database of the Mahābhārata for Assisting Research/Analysis

P. RAMANUJAN

The Mahābhārata is well-known to exist in various versions. Under a project funded by Central Secretariat Library, Dept. of Culture, New Delhi, the Indian Heritage Group developed a database of the Mahābhārata as per Bhanderkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) edition, but it included the additional texts from other versions as given therein. The present paper seeks to demonstrate the database with its navigational and retrieval features.

Facilities to preserve study and publish information contained in manuscripts (palm leaf, paper, etc.) with the help of advanced computing tools and technologies are welcome in order to unearth the treasures hidden in them for betterment of mankind. C-DAC has developed a comprehensive Manuscript Processing Software *Pāṇḍu-Lipi Samśodhaka* for the purpose of the critical edition of Sanskrit texts. Having evolved PC-ISCII standards for proper representation of all Sanskrit and Vedic character set in computers, it developed an exhaustive knowledgebase of Vedas, Vedāṅgas and Upāṅgas and application programs for the fourteen Vidyāsthānas and tools and utilities like editor, index, search, concordance, etc. We now undertake to extend these to the deciphering of manuscripts in scripts like Grantha, Nandināgarī, Telugu, Malayalam, etc. of Sanskrit/Vedic texts, many of which are not yet published. The *Pāṇḍu-lipi Saṃśodhaka* is useful in the collation of various versions, search, view, print, etc. of texts from different sources for critical editions of rare, unpublished works.

This promises to facilitate the study of the text and variations in the Mahābhārata, not withstanding its regional and contextual factors. We describe the salient features of this further.

Features

The functional modules of the system cover acquisition, formatting, inputting, indexing, creating database, searching, locating, printing, collation and publishing. The range of texts covered include Sastric texts, Ṛgveda, Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Lakṣaṇa Granthas, texts in Tamil, a combination of Tamil and Sanskrit, called Maṇipravāla, etc. in a variety of scripts. The sample includes about fifty works, one hundred and twenty manuscripts, six scripts and many domains. There are about 3500 leaves (pages) as images to accompany the PC-ISCII texts. Two of these texts, viz. Ṣaḍvimśati Sūtra and Yohi Bhāṣya, are chosen for illustration and possible publication of a critical edition with a Sanskrit commentary.

Description of the Modules

Acquisition

(a) One typically starts with consulting catalogues, indices, lists, reports, etc. of manuscript collection of desired texts through a number of sources Bibliographic survey.

(b) Select the ones feasible to obtain from the list (short-listing). Provide for balanced representation of various regions, script and versions (i.e. with commentaries, with accents etc.)

(c) Acquire copies xeroxed/scanned /microfilmed
(d) Convert/export to a single (uniform) format i.e. jpg in the current case. Factors like clarity, condition of original, resolution of scanning and size of the image files, all influence the choice of common format used.

Formatting

The inputs come in various forms, when raw, i.e. from the institutions/library collections, we may have 3.5 or even 10 folios per scanned image. Here the two sides of the folios are in different files and the job of sequencing the image as per text and separation of folios is involved. Numbering them serially according to the text is done. An important task here, in the case of manuscript bundles containing different texts, is separation of the texts and folios belonging to multiple texts. They must be present in all the works concerned. Usually, libraries offer separation, if catalogued already.

Inputting

We strongly recommend the entry of the data contained in the manuscripts for the purpose of study, word-split, index, search (phrases), editing and collation. This, of course, requires domain experts who are difficult to get. However, the IHG offer expertise in this endeavour. We also have another possible source for data entry, which is loading text, if the work in the manuscript is one of available digital texts from our repository. (A list of about 250 texts from all Vidyāsthānas is available. C-DAC Indian Heritage Portal would make this available on the web soon).

Adding commentaries, translations, hyperlinks, annotations for collation, etc. are the factors necessitating data-entry. Also transliteration, training in rare scripts, etc. are enabled. However, efforts may be launched to develop efficient OCR or speech recognition systems of high quality simultaneously and when these mature, we can minimize data entry needed.

Editing

This step involves aligning the data entered, with the original manuscript, line by line and page by page. This also can be done in an edit box/window below (or adjacent to) the image of the manuscript or entered through Vedic Editor and inserted into database. The pages and line boundaries are as before. Adding information for retrieval, hyperlinks etc., can also be done. Multilingual texts, currently require LEAP-like software for data entry and use in RTF format in the system for further processing. Here ISCII-ISFOC conversions are employed. Currently Vedic texts of Sāmaveda Gāna require use of only Grantha script and transliteration is not available. Śrautam and Guruparamparā Prabhāva etc. are multilingual samples. These are typed in LEAP and processed through rtf controls.

Creating database

The PC-ISCII text files (*.pci) created by data entry or loading data are to be converted into database format. This is either Microsoft Access or Microsoft FoxPro format covering various fields for facilitating information retrieval. There is a utility that converts from aci./pci. format to db. format. Dạtabases of works, institutions, manuscripts, books etc., are also created and linked in the application list of abbreviations. Scheme of data for reference in these texts etc. are also created as tables.

Searching

This is the crux of the system and helps in providing word or phrase level search (with and without accent-markers) across the database, text-wise, and lists the manuscript reference numbers where the search string occurs. In future, this can be extended across texts if need be (this feature is there in our Vedic Editor, wherein a string occurring in any of the 250+ texts are listed as a concordance). Choice of script, facility to transliterate, and seeing the results in the same manner of alignment as the manuscript are the useful aspects.

Locating

This refers to locating the search string in the image of the particular page of the manuscript where it occurs, including the line number and location in it. We see the string 'highlighted' in the text window by choosing 'find' in the page and physically looking in the corresponding line and 'location' in it on the image above.by selecting view in 'search' mode. The text window is provided with line numbers to facilitate this manual locating in the image.

Printing

Provision should be there to print the texts in database, search results, etc. in any script of choice or script of the original etc. so that further reference or insertion into documents can be enabled. Report generation kind of printing needs can also be addressed. List of texts, institutions, reference details etc. can be printed.

Collation

From the search function, we can organise the readings of different texts (like 'file compare') across the manuscripts combined with report generators. A scheme for annotating can be devised to assist here. Work will follow to enrich features here.

Publishing

Publication through Desk-top-publishing can be done by exporting to some DTP software and adding embellishments as desired.

The Mahābhārata Database Project was funded by Central Secretariat Library, Department of Culture, Government of India. It began as a Pilot Project for preparing the Database of Śānti Parvan with 18,000 ślokas (verses) in the year 2000.

After the successful completion of the pilot phase, the total project was undertaken, which was completed in the year 2001. The source material for the text to be followed was the BORI Edition.

The work got over with many value-added features over and above the original project specifications. Some of these were:

The complete ślokas of Mahābhārata would be converted into machine readable form using GIST Card with appropriate database system. The main stress will be on the retrieval of information.

The retrieval will be by –

1. Any word of śloka,
2. Any number of śloka,
3. Any part of the śloka,
4. Complicated samāsas,
5. Event of āśīrvāda/śāpa and the actual happening with links of chapter, parvan, śloka number, etc. and
6. Reference to the context, who said to whom and when in which śloka with links of chapter, parvan, śloka number, etc.

The following index files will be prepared:

1. Name index
2. Chapter index
3. Parvan index
4. Geographical index
5. Family tree index
6. Compound words with sandhi-viccheda and hyperlinks listing
7. Character index
8. Authority files of variant personal names and variant geographical names.

Against these specifications, the funding and duration, the achievements are much higher than expectations, particularly on compound word dissolution, tagging and analysis. This is, in fact, the single most significant feature of the entire project. A Technical Advisory Committee comprising eminent Sanskritists (chaired by Prof. Ramkaran Sharma) have monitored the progress, and come out in high praise of the effort at Sanskrit analysis through computers.

Regarding compliance, items 1 to 4 and 6 (partly) are in retrieval and all but geographical/family/character names are achieved. To prepare the material required for these items (including samāsa analysis), a panel of experts was selected country-wide after organizing a workshop on the scheme and methodology. The scheme of mark-up is quite elaborate and envisages around sixty distinct tags to be used appropriately for helping analysis. This feature is by far the most exhaustive tagging scheme for the Epic, and hence should rank as one of the significant achievements of the project. The scheme is appended at the end.

Salient Features of the Mahābhārata Database

The database can be browsed for any desired parvan (and sarga) as text (optionally as word-split and marked-up or tagged form as well) with choice of scripts from among Assamese, Bengali, Devanagari, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Roman (with diacritics), Tamil and Telugu [Hindi, Konkani, Marathi, Nepali and Sanskrit share Devanagari Script]. Additional details provided are sarga name and Antar-parvan name. Prose form of the text are wrapped around to new line after about fifty characters. On-line help is provided in all screens.

In the retrieval mode, multiple ways of selecting/ searching the desired information are provided like parvan, sarga, śloka number, word (split form), part of a śloka (phrase search includes blanks and multiple words also), by sarga name, speaker name, topic name (prakaraṇa/ viṣaya), *prātipadika* or nominal stem search, be it the initial, middle or final member of a compound word and Boolean search to cover these with logical operators like AND, OR, NOT etc.

All these are provided with keyboard short-cut (hot keys) and icons with descriptions. Details like parvan name, sarga name, speaker name, antar-parvan name are available. Script change, marked-up form view, help and back (exit) are standard features. In the search by number option, on selecting the parvan, admissible limits of sarga numbers and thereupon, those of śloka numbers are displayed for valid values to be entered.

In the 'search word' option, on entering few initial characters (even one), all admissible words beginning with the typed characters are listed and choosing anyone thereupon, the śloka numbers are displayed with the ref. no. scheme for desired values to be selected. The selected śloka with all other details is displayed as before.

In the 'phrase search' option, any particular parvan or all can be chosen and the phrase can be typed. All occurrences, with statistics and details of information are displayed. On choosing any desired number, the particular śloka is shown. Sarga, speaker and topic names are also similarly selected. In prātipadika search, the desired stem as beginning, middle or end are additionally singly or severally selectable, and with statistics, detailed display of the ślokas containing those compound words are shown.

In the 'Index mode', word, name, sarga, śloka, samāsa and speaker indices are provided. Śloka index covers the entire Mahābhārata and samāsa index has two-tier selection for first-level and subsequent detailed types. Help files are also accessible from any screen by pressing F1 key or Help button. There is also a demo of the program as a guided tour included in the CD-ROM.

The Samāsa Mark-up Scheme Used for the Mahābhārata Database Project

The proposed scheme for mark-up is given here for discussion and adoption. It may be noted that name of the compound, its notation (tag) to be used for mark-up and examples are included in the scheme. Marked-up examples are also included for many cases for purposes of illustration.

Multiple word compounds are also shown to clarify the scheme. The bracketing in the tags also has distinction between words where compounding proceeds sequentially (i.e, from left to right) and where there is a change in its direction. These are also suitably illustrated. Nested brackets could be used later with our programs.

Multiple mark-ups for words denoting different possibilities/interpretations or allegories etc. are also encouraged to be indicated by using ? and placing alternate tag(s) in curly brackets. e.g, word1—Tag1/{?Tag2...}.

By the same token, multiple splits of words also (especially in classical literature) may be indicated by copying the text under question and splitting alternately but in curly brackets. Preference among them is left to the experts.

We have suggested certain specific features like not marking *samāsānta taddhita* suffixes etc. in the end where possible (with exceptions as in +t option in *dvigu,* for example) and also included *lyabanta avyaya*s as *samāsa* etc. In all cases, a compound word has at least a pair of angle brackets (< & >). The underscore character (_) will be the delimiter for tags. Hyphens separate stems.

[ˇIn-line.WMF *]*

The marked-up files were processed for tags and statistically analysed. The following interesting summary of the break-up of compounds is obtained:

Total number of ślokas (in main text) – 73815
[There are about 28,000 ślokas in the
appendices].

Total no. of words - 7,00,000
Total no. of compound words -
Total no. of compounds - 1,35,827

Main samāsa type	Sub Type	Count
Avyayībhāva		1808
	A1	1701
	A2	31
	A3	76
Tatpuruṣa		66458
	T1	67
	T2	529
	T3	7569
	T4	620
	T5	595
	T6	32107
	U	8944
	Tds	383
	Tds+t	154
	Tdt	4
	Tdu	6
	Tg	7244
	Tp	8096
	Tm	134
	Tb	6
Karmadhāraya		18838
	K1	16468
	K2	47
	K3	106
	K4	198
	K5	1595
	Km	424
Bahuvrīhi-samānādhikaraṇa		22663
	Bs2	33
	Bs3	1208

	Bs4	13
	Bs5	264
	Bs6	16442
	Bs7	272
	Bsd	4
	Bsp	2
	Bsmn	951
	Bsg	0
	Bsmg	220
	Bss	40
	BsU	161
Bahuvrīhi-vyadhikaraṇa		
	Bv	204
	BvS	2151
	Bvs	237
	BvU	364
	Bb	97
Dvandva		8425
Itaretara	Di	7893
Samāhāra	Ds	453
Itaretara - viruddha	DiV	79
Ekaśeṣa		9
S - kevala		805
! (Aluk)		83
Ambiguous/Unknown		16738
Total		135827

Of these, we see that the three types, viz, T6 Bs6 and K1 cover nearly half of all compounds. Hence, devising a rule-based program for generating the vigraha-vākyas will be attempted.

8

महाभारत के पाठ के आलोचनात्मक अभ्यास में चुनौतियाँ

वसन्तकुमार म. भट्ट

महर्षि व्यास प्रोक्त 'महाभारत' नामक इतिहास को निखिल संसार की सबसे बड़ी रचना होने का गौरव प्राप्त हुआ है। महाभारत एक लाख श्लोक-प्रमाणवाली रचना है। ऐसी विशाल कायावाले ग्रन्थराज की पाठालोचना करके; उपलब्ध सभी पाठान्तरों एवं प्रक्षेपादि के साथ, उसको प्रकाशित करने का सौभाग्य पुण्यपत्तन (पूना) स्थित "भाण्डारकर ओरिएन्टल रिसर्च इन्स्टीट्यूट" को प्राप्त हुआ है। इस कार्य का आरम्भ तो यद्यपि विदेश में ई॰ सं. 1919 से शुरु हुआ था। परन्तु तत्कालीन विश्वयुद्ध के कारण उसमें कुछ रुकावट आई, और बाद में भारतीय मनीषियों ने उस भगीरथ कार्य को अपने हाथों में लिया। भाण्डारकर ओरिएन्टल रिसर्च इन्स्टीट्यूट ने ई. सं. 1933 से लेकर 1966 तक निरन्तर कार्य करके, महाभारत के सभी पर्वों का क्रमशः प्रकाशन किया। महाभारत की इस समीक्षित आवृत्ति (Critical Edition) किस दृष्टिकोण से बनाई गई है, यह बात विस्तार से आदिपर्व की प्रस्तावना में आद्य सम्पादक श्री वी.एस. सुकथंकरजी ने लिखी है। परन्तु यह तो स्पष्ट है कि यहाँ पर महर्षि व्यासजी ने गणेशजी से जो पाठ (Text) लिखवाया था, उस पाठ को ढूंढ निकालने का प्रयास नहीं किया गया था। परन्तु लिखित दस्तावेज के रूप में जो पाठ हस्तलिखित पाण्डुलिपियों में शताब्दिओं से संचरित होता हुआ आ रहा था, उसका तुलनात्मक अध्ययन करके सारे भारतवर्ष में जो पाठ प्राचीनकाल से प्रवहमान दिखाई दे रहा है और

जो एक समान रूप से बहुमान्यपाठ के रूप में ध्यान में आया है, और जो लिपिकारों के अज्ञान एवं असावधानीजनित अशुद्धियों से मुक्त किया गया है वैसे पाठ को हमारे सामने प्रस्तुत किया गया है। जिस दृष्टिकोण से महाभारत पर व्याख्या लिखने वाले नीलकण्ठ ने कहा है कि–

भाष्यकारादिभिर्व्याख्यातान् संप्रतितनपुस्तकेषु च स्थितान् (विविधान्) पाठान् श्लोकांश्च गुणोपसंहारन्यायेन एकीकृत्य, व्याख्यायते।।

(उद्योगपर्वणि - 42 अ०)

उसी दृष्टिकोण से डॉ० वी.एस. सुकथंकरजी ने भी अपनी समीक्षित आवृत्ति को उपलब्ध "विभिन्न पाठपरम्पराओं का एकत्रीकृत विश्वकोश" कहा है।[1]

अतः अनेक वर्षों की तपश्चर्या के पश्चात्, और भारतीय एवं कतिपय विदेशी विद्वानों की उत्तम मनीषा ने मिलकर 'महाभारत' का जो समीक्षित पाठ आज हमें दिया है, वह स्पृहणीय है, समादरणीय है। परन्तु महाभारत के पाठ की आलोचना का प्रसंग आने पर यह भी कहना पड़ेगा कि इस कार्य की इतिश्री अभी नहीं हुई है। बल्कि आरम्भ ही हुआ है।

(1)

महाभारत के पाठ की आलोचना करने की पूर्वभूमिका के रूप में जो विचारणीय बिन्दु है वह इस तरह का है:–संस्कृत या पालि-प्राकृत भाषा में उपनिबद्ध ग्रन्थों की पाण्डुलिपिओं में मिलनेवाला पाठ किस स्वरूप का है?–ऐसा प्रश्न यदि उठाया जाए तो हमारे प्राचीन भारतीय वाङ्मय का पृथक्करण निम्न चार प्रकार से किया जा सकता है।

(1) **दृष्टपाठ** :–भारतीय परंपरागत मान्यता के अनुसार ऋषियों को वेदमन्त्रों का 'दर्शन' हुआ था। अतः वेदमन्त्रों का पाठ 'दृष्ट-पाठ' कहा जाएगा। वेदों के दृष्टपाठ को अकर्तृक-पाठ (या अज्ञातकर्तृक-पाठ) भी हम कहेंगे। इस प्रकार का वाङ्मय आधुनिक समय की पाठालोचना के कार्यक्षेत्र से प्रायः बाहर है। क्योंकि साक्षात्कृतधर्मा ऋषियों ने और ब्राह्मणों ने इस 'शब्दप्रधान' साहित्य को पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी उदात्तादि स्वरों के साथ ही कण्ठस्थ करके हम तक अद्यावधि पहुँचाया है।

(2) **श्रुतपाठ** :–भगवान् बुद्ध एवं भगवान् महावीर की वाणी का जो पाठ है–उनके उपदेशवचनों का जो पाठ है–वह 'श्रुतपाठ' कहा जाना चाहिए। इन

उपदेशवचनों का कोई 'स्वहस्तलेख' कभी भी नहीं था। वह केवल गुरुशिष्य की मुख्यपरम्परा से संचरित होता रहा पाठ है। यहाँ पर पाठालोचना की जो प्रमुख समस्या है वह भगवान् बुद्ध या भगवान् महावीर की वाणी का मूल ध्वन्यात्मक स्वरूप को पुनर्जीवित करने की है। उदाहरण रूप से कहें तो–जैनों के आगम आज महाराष्ट्री-प्राकृत में मिलते हैं; परन्तु इससे पहले तो वह शौरसेनी-प्राकृत में थे, और उनसे भी पूर्व में मूल में तो वह महावीर के मुख से मगध देश की अर्धमागधी भाषा में उच्चरित हुए थे। अतः जहाँ 'अर्थदेशना' वाला साहित्य है, वहाँ मूलभाषा का स्वरूप ही प्रायः पूर्णतः बदल गया है। यहाँ बुद्ध एवं महावीर की वाणी के मूलस्वरूप के 'उद्धार' की समस्या है।

(3) **कृतपाठः**–संस्कृत-पालि-प्राकृत में ऐसे भी ग्रन्थ लिखे गए हैं, जो एककर्तृक-रचनाएं हैं। जैसे कि महाकवि कालिदास ने अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल की रचना की थी। एक ही समय में, एक ही कर्ता के द्वारा जो साहित्य लिखा गया है, उसमें काव्य, नाटक, शास्त्र एवं भाष्यादि-टीकाओं का समावेश होता है। इन ग्रन्थों की पाठालोचना में यह गृहीत रहेगा कि यदि ग्रन्थकार एक ही है, तो उसकी कृति का पाठ भी एकरूपता वाला ही हो। परन्तु वास्तविक स्थिति भिन्न मिलती है। लिपिकारों के अज्ञान या अनवधान से कृति के पाठ में अशुद्धियाँ प्रविष्ट होती हैं। जिसके कारण प्रत्येक कृति के पाठ में एकरूपता के स्थान पर विरूपता दिखाई पड़ती हैं। अब एककर्तृक काव्यरचना या शास्त्ररचना में पाठद्वैविध्य होना, किसी भी दृष्टि से ग्राह्य नहीं बनेगा। क्योंकि जब कृति का कर्ता ही एक है तो वहाँ पाठकी विरूपता असह्य ही मानी जाएगी। ऐसी एककर्तृक रचनाओं की पाठालोचना करने के लिए (1) अनुसन्धान (Hueristics), (2) संशोधन (Recensio), (3) संस्करण (Emendatio), और (4) उच्चतर समीक्षा (Higher criticism) जैसी चतुर्विध सोपानवाली पाठसमीक्षा ही करनी पड़ेगी।

(4) **प्रोक्तपाठ** :–संस्कृतादि प्राचीन भाषाओं में लिखे गए कुछ ग्रन्थ ऐसे भी हैं जिनको अनेककर्तृक-रचनाएं कहना चाहिए। उदाहरण रूप से–रामायण, महाभारत, अष्टादश पुराण एवं नाट्यशास्त्र। ये ग्रन्थ जब से लिखे गए हैं, तब से वह प्रवचन माध्यम से ही जनसमुदाय में प्रवाहित होते रहे हैं। जैसे कि–प्रसिद्ध किंवदन्ती के अनुसार व्यास ने कौरवों-पाण्डवों के युद्ध की कथा गणेशजी से लिखवाई थी। बाद में वही कथा वैशम्पायन ने जन्मेजय से कही और तृतीय स्तर पर सुत पौराणिकों ने उसे नैमिषारण्य जैसी जगहों पर शौनकादि ऋषियों को कही

थी। अतः प्रवचन के माध्यम से प्रचलित हुए साहित्य को हम 'प्रोक्त' साहित्य कहेंगे।

यहाँ पर अनेक कथा-कीर्तन एवं आख्यान कर्ताओं ने अपनी ओर से हमेशा कुछ न कुछ नया अंश जोड़ा ही है, और कुछ परिवर्तन भी किया है।

(2)

अतः ऐसी अनेककर्तृक-रचनाएं जो भारतदेश के विभिन्न तीर्थस्थानों में और प्रलम्ब कालखण्ड में निरन्तर होती रही हैं। उसकी पाठ-समीक्षा कैसे की जाए? वह अभी भी विवादास्पद हैं क्योंकि भाण्डारकर ओरिएन्टल रिसर्च इन्स्टीट्यूट (पूना) से जो 'समीक्षित पाठ' प्रकाशित हुआ है, वह तो केवल पाण्डुलिपियों में संचरित हुए विभिन्न प्रकार के पाठों का ही तुलनात्मक अध्ययन करके, हमारे सामने प्रस्तुत किया गया है। परन्तु जब ऐसा देखा जाए कि "समीक्षित" कहा जाने वाला पाठ भी भारत के जनमानस में विद्यमान कतिपय पाठों की उपेक्षा करता है, तब तो यह स्वाभाविक ही है कि भारत का आम-आदमी ऐसे "समीक्षित पाठ" से बिलकुल विमुख रहेगा।

उदाहरण रूप में कहें तो-द्रौपदी-वस्त्राहरण प्रसंग में भगवान् श्रीकृष्ण ने द्रौपदी की बिनती को सुनकर असंख्य वस्त्रों की वृष्टि की थी और दुःशासन को हताश कर दिया था-यह बात पूना की समीक्षित आवृत्ति में उपलब्ध नहीं होती है।

अतः पूना की आवृत्ति आम-आदमी के लिए कदापि स्वीकार्य नहीं बनेगी। "हारे को हरि-नाम" जैसी आस्था पर जो भारतीय-जनमानस जी रहा है, उसको तो, यह समीक्षित आवृत्ति किसी भी काम की नहीं है। ऐसी स्थिति में पाण्डुलिपियों में संचरित पाठपरम्परा की समीक्षा करने के साथ-साथ; जो भारतवर्ष के और भारत के पड़ोसी देशों के लोकसाहित्य में, कला-जगत् में, एवं चित्र-शिल्प-स्थापत्यादि की सार्वभौम परम्पराओं में प्रवाहित होता रहा पाठ है, उसकी जांच-पड़ताल शुरु करना आवश्यक बन जाता है।

(3)

पाठालोचन अर्थात् पाठसमीक्षा (Textual Critiaism) का मूलभूत जो

हार्द है, वह कवि या शास्त्रकार के अभीष्ट पाठ की खोज है।[2] लेकिन 'एककर्तृक-रचना' और 'अनेककर्तृक-रचना' में गवेषणीय पाठ्यांश भिन्न-भिन्न होंगे। यह भी ध्यान से समझने की बात है। जैसा कि-(1) जहाँ पर 'एककर्तृक-रचना' के रूप में किसी कवि या शास्त्रकार की कृति होगी, वहाँ पर दो या अधिक पाठपरम्पराओं में से एक ही मौलिक पाठपरम्परा का निर्धारण करना होता है। जिसमें कवि की शैली, छन्दः, प्राचीन टीकाकारों का समर्थन, विरोधी परम्परा का भी यथासम्भव समर्थन, पूर्वापर संगति, और कृति का अन्तःसाक्ष्यादि उपयोग में लिया जाता है। परन्तु यहाँ 'एककर्तृक-रचना' होने से अपेक्षा यही रहेगी कि विभिन्न पाठान्तरों में से एक ही पाठ का निर्धारण किया जाए। (2) लेकिन जहाँ पर 'अनेककर्तृक-रचना' के रूप में 'महाभारत' (या कोई अन्य पुराण) जैसी कृति होगी, वहाँ पर 'प्राचीन पाठ' क्या रहा होगा? यह ढूंढने के बाद; उससे भी 'प्राचीनतर पाठ' एवं 'प्राचीनतम पाठ' क्या रहा होगा? यह हमारी जिज्ञासा का विषय बनता है। अर्थात् 'प्रोक्तग्रन्थ' के विभिन्न कालखण्ड में बने विविध स्तर हमारी जिज्ञासा के विषय बनते है।

समीक्षित-पाठसम्पादन के क्षेत्र में अभी तक जो कार्य हुआ है उसमें "बृहत्पाठ की अपेक्षा से लघुपाठ अधिक प्राचीन/मूलगामी होता है" इस सिद्धान्त का अनुसरण करते हुए भाण्डारकर ओरिएन्टल रिसर्च इन्स्टीस्ट्यूट (BORI) ने महाभारत की उत्तरीवाचना का पाठ अधिक श्रद्धेय एवं 'प्राचीन' मान कर उसका 'समीक्षित पाठ' तैयार किया है; प्रकाशित किया है। दूसरी ओर "सरल पाठ की अपेक्षा से, क्लिष्ट एवं आर्षपाठ मूलगामी होने की अधिक सम्भावना होती है।" ऐसे सिद्धान्त का अनुसरण करके रामायण की उत्तरीवाचना की अपेक्षा से दक्षिणी वाचना के पाठ में आर्षपाठ अधिक सुरक्षित रखे गए हैं, एवं प्राचीन टीकाकारों के द्वारा भी यही दक्षिणी पाठ परम्परा समादृत रही है। ऐसे निष्कर्ष के आधार पर दाक्षिणात्य परम्परा के पाठ को लेकर वाल्मीकीय 'रामायण' का समीक्षित-पाठसम्पादन बड़ौदा से प्रकाशित किया गया है। इस तरह प्रथम चरण में रामायण-महाभारत की समीक्षितावृत्तियों में 'प्राचीन' पाठ का उद्धार तो हो गया है। परन्तु इस प्रथम चरण का कार्य सम्पन्न हो जाने के बाद द्वितीय चरण की 'इतिकर्तव्यता' इस तरह दिखाई दे रही है:-

रामायण, महाभारत एवं पुराणादि को हम यदि 'प्रोक्तपाठ' वाले ग्रन्थ के रूप में पहचानेंगे, तो यह बात स्पष्ट है कि अनेक कालखण्ड में अनेक कर्ताओं के द्वारा ऐसी रचनाओं का परिवर्तन एवं परिवर्द्धन (उपबृंहण) होता रहा है। अतः

ऐसी रचनाओं में से प्राचीन से प्राचीनतर; तथा प्राचीनतर से प्राचीनतम पाठ क्या रहा होगा? उसकी भी गवेषणा शुरु करनी चाहिए।

विभिन्न कालखण्डों में बने विभिन्न स्तरों को अलग करने के लिए दो दृष्टिकोण तो हमारे सामने अद्यावधि आ चुके हैं :–

(1) महाभारत के आदिपर्व में ही कहा गया है कि महर्षि व्यास ने मूल में तो 'जयसंहिता' की रचना की थी; जिस में कौरव-पाण्डवों के युद्ध की कथा ही थी। बाद में व्यास के शिष्य वैशम्पायनने उसमें भरतवंश की कौरव-पाण्डवों के उद्भवादि की कथा जोड़कर 'भारतसंहिता' बनाई। यह कथा जनमेजय के सर्पसत्र में महर्षि व्यास की आज्ञा से वैशम्पायनने जनमेजय को सुनाई थी। तदनन्तर, अनेकानेक आख्यानोपाख्यान का नया संग्रह जोड़कर सौति ने उसको 'भारत' से 'महाभारत' बनाया। अर्थात् शतसाहस्त्री-संहिता का विकराल रूप दिया। इस तरह, 'महाभारत' स्वयं में तीसरा संस्करण है।

अतः स्वाभाविक है कि आज प्राप्त होने वाले महाभारत के पुरोवर्ती दो स्वरूप-डॉ० वी.एस. सुकथंकरजी ने लिखा है कि The Mahābhārata began its existence as a simple epic narrative. It became in course of centuries the Monstrous Choas. [See: *On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata,* p. 1]

अर्थात् महर्षि व्यास ने मूल में जो 'जय' नाम का 'इतिहास' काव्य लिखवाया था, वह प्रथम स्तर की रचना हमें ढूंढनी चाहिए।

गुजरात के शतायुः पद्मश्री के०का० शास्त्रीजी ने अपने जीवनकाल में 'भारतसंहिता' और 'जयसंहिता' का निर्धारण करके प्रकाशन किया है।[3] 'भारतसंहिता' का प्रथम निर्धारण करने के लिए उन्होंने–

चतुर्विंशतिसाहस्त्रीं चक्रे भारतसंहिताम्।
उपाख्यानैर्विना तावद् भारतं प्रोच्यते बुधैः।। (महाभारत० 1-1-61)

श्लोक से मार्गदर्शन प्राप्त किया। एवम् महाभारत के सभी उपाख्यान हटा कर, 24,000 श्लोक वाली 'भारतसंहिता' बनाई। जिसमें–आदिपर्व (3 से 1, 2 श्लोक), 55 अध्याय से स्त्रीपर्व (11),-24वाँ आश्वमेधिक पर्व के 54, 575 श्लोकों में से उपाख्यानों को हटा कर 23, 282 श्लोकवाली 'भारतसंहिता' प्राप्त होती है।

उसके बाद, श्री के० का० शास्त्री जी ने 'जयसंहिता' का निर्धारण किया। उसमें–आदिपर्व (3, 1.2)-54 अ० से उद्योगपर्व के 154-196-117 अध्याय

लिए; तथा भीष्म, द्रोण, कर्ण, शल्यपर्व के संक्षिप्त युद्धवर्णन + स्त्रीपर्व के और्ध्वदेहिक वर्णन, एवं अश्वमेधयज्ञ + पाण्डवों का हस्तिनापुर प्रवेश–इतनी कथा को लेकर "जयसंहिता" नाम दिया गया है। यहाँ पर कुल मिला के 8801 श्लोक हैं।

अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्त्रांणि अष्टौ श्लोकशतानि च।
अहं वेद्मि शुको वेत्ति संजयो वेत्ति वा न वा॥

अनुक्रमणिकापर्व, अ. 1–81 महाभारत से प्रेरणा लेकर यह निर्धारित हुआ है।

(2) 'महाभारत' के विभिन्न कालखण्ड में लिखे गए, जोड़े गए अंशों को पृथक्कृत करने के लिए प्रो. एम. आर. यार्दी ने भी एक अत्यन्त प्रशंसनीय शोध कार्य हमारे सामने रखा है। उनके शोधकार्य का प्रकाशन भाण्डारकर ओरिएन्टल रिसर्च इन्स्टीट्यूट (पूना) से ही हुआ है :

The Multipale authorship of the Mahābhārata: A Statistical approach (in 1977, 1978, 1982, 1983, 1984 etc.) the Annals of the BORI, Pune.

डॉ० यार्दीजी ने महाभारत के विभिन्न पर्वों के श्लोकों में प्रयुक्त अनुष्टुप्छन्द का बारीकी से अध्ययन किया; और लघु-गुरु के बंधारण का विश्लेषण करके, उन-उन पर्वों के अनेककर्तृत्व को हमारे सामने उजागर किया है। उस प्रकार का शोधकार्य भी 'प्रोक्तपाठ' में से 'प्राचीनतर' अंश को निर्धारित करने की जिज्ञासा से ही प्रेरित हुआ करते हैं।

× × ×

इसी दिशा में अन्य प्रयास भी यहाँ उल्लेखनीय हैं। जैसे कि (क) *The Quest for the Gitakara: Multiple authorship revisited*—by Robert, N. Minor; Published in the Annals of the BORI, Pune, 1983, (ख) GITA—My Research and Interpretation, by G.S. Khair, Ahmedabad, 1981.

× × ×

(3) 'भारतसंहिता' में जब अनेक उपाख्यानों का प्रक्षेप किया गया तब, उसमें तीर्थयात्राएं, दान–दीक्षा, धर्मोपदेश, दार्शनिकचिन्तनादि भी सम्मिलित किया गया है। अतः 'महाभारत' को 'धर्मकाव्य' भी कहा गया है; तथा "यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र", और "यन्नेहास्ति न कुत्रचित्" कह कर उसको "विश्वकोश" का रूप भी दिया गया है। परिणामस्वरूप विश्वकोश के रूप में यहाँ जो एकत्र किया गया है, वह भारतदेश की वैचारिक यात्रा का विश्लेषण करके, विभिन्न

कालखण्ड में जोड़े गए अंशों को पृथक् करने का समय आ गया है। जैसे कि–उदाहरण रूप से कहें तो–

(क) महाभारत में बौद्धविचार से प्रभावित अंशों का काल–निर्धारण करना चाहिए। बौद्धों की शिबिजातक कथा और महाभारत में निर्दिष्ट शिबि राजा की गुणमहिमा, बौद्धों के धर्मचक्रप्रवर्तन के सामने भगवद्गीता का यज्ञचक्रप्रवर्तन, 'बुद्धनिर्वाण' के साथ गीता का 'ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति।' इत्यादि तुलनीय है।

(ख) वैदिक देवताओं–इन्द्रः अग्नि, वरुणादि का अस्त और ब्रह्मा–विष्णु–महेश का उदय, कब–कैसे हुआ? इस सन्दर्भ में महाभारत का परिवेश समीक्ष्य है। 'वनपर्व' (अ० 38–51) में अर्जुन–किरातबुद्ध एवं पाशुपतास्त्र की प्राप्ति इत्यादि पुराकथाशास्त्रीय (Epic Mythological) सन्दर्भ का विश्लेषण करके उसकी ऐतिहासिक एवं पुरातत्त्वीय समीक्षा भी करनी चाहिए। यह एक चुनौती भी है और हमारी 'इति कर्तव्यता' भी है।[4]

(4)

प्रस्तुत चर्चा में, एक अन्तिम बात कहने को अवशिष्ट रहती है। 'राष्ट्रीय पाण्डुलिपि मिशन' (न्यू दिल्ली) के द्वारा गत चार वर्षों में जो अनुपम कार्य किया गया है, और जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप हमारे सामने 'महाभारत' की जो नई पाण्डुलिपियों की जानकारी आई है; उसका भी विनियोग करके 'महाभारत' की दूसरी समीक्षितावृत्ति तैयार करने को सोचा जा सकता है। या BORI की आवृत्ति का पुनः परीक्षण किया जा सकता है। तथा पाण्डुलिपियों में सुरक्षित/संचरित पाठपरम्पराओं का बाहर से समर्थन प्राप्त करने के लिए हमारे भारतवर्ष को लोककला, नृत्य–नाट्य, लोकगीत, शिल्प–स्थापत्यादि का भी अवश्य विनियोग करना चाहिए। परन्तु यहाँ एक सावधानी भी बरतनी होगी कि–''सभी लोक–कलाएं एवं नृत्यादि या प्रान्तीय 'बोलियों (dialects) में प्रचलित पाठपरम्पराएं सुदूर अतीत से ही चली आती हैं।'' ऐसा सर्वथा/सर्वांश से नहीं मान लेना चाहिए। अर्थात् लिखित दस्तावेज (पाण्डुलिपियों के पाठ) का प्रामाणिक स्वरूप एवं कालावधि निर्धारित करने के लिए लोक–कलाओं का विनियोग जरूर हो सकता है, परन्तु वह विवेकपूर्वक होना चाहिए। महाभारत के मूलपाठ का उद्धार करने के लिए अविरत रूप से, उसमें रत होने की परम आवश्यकता है।

टिप्पण

1. It will be a veritable thesaurus of the Mahābhārata tradition, *Prolegomena to the Mahābhārata,* p. IV.
2. The aim of the "Textual critic" may then be defined as the restoration of the text, as far as possible, to its orginal form, if by "Original form" we understand the form intended by its author, *Encyclopedia of Britannica,* vol. 22, pp. 6-11.
3. *The Jaya-Samhita, i-e. The Ur-Mahābhārata,* (vol. I and II), ed, K.K. Sharma, Gujarat Research Society, Ahmedabad, 1977.
4. आनुर्षंगिक रूप से एक बात यह भी कहने योग्य है कि–एककर्तृक–रचनाओं में से 'शाकुन्तल' जैसी कृति का पाठ, जो ''संमिश्रित–वाचना'' के रूप में प्रकाशित हुआ आज मिलता है, उसकी पाठालोचना में भी 'प्रोक्तपाठ' (अनेककर्तृक–रचना) की तरह, 'प्राचीन से प्राचीनतर' एवं 'प्रचीनतर से प्राचीनतम' अंश ही प्रथमतया पृथक्करणीय है। –इति दिक्

SECTION II

Regional Traditions

9

Tamil Women and a Mahābhārata Myth*

Vijaya Ramaswamy

This paper looks at the imaging of women in myth and history in terms of historical and geographical specificities. This study of the birth of a myth from the Mahābhārata is an attempt to contextualize the process of transmission and transmutation of a great epic mythology. The myth of Alli and her marriage to Arjuna, a leading protagonist of the Mahābhārata hence constitutes a significant regional variant of a grand narrative. Wendy O'Flaherty's statement could well be the starting point of such a study. I quote:

> *"The Mahābhārata grows out of the oral traditions; it flickers back and forth between Sanskrit manuscripts and village storytellers, each adding new lists to the old story, constantly reinterpreting it."*[1]

The Mahābhārata epic is located primarily in Northern India, with the main action centres – Indraprastha, Hastināpura and Kurukṣetra – situated geographically in the modern regions of Delhi and Haryana. Yet this great epic crossed the Vindhyas fairly early and reached the Tamil country during the early Christian era.

The myths and legends of the Mahābhārata epic are not frozen in time. This article looks at the changing perceptions of women in Tamil society and the imaging of Tamil women within the male patriarchal register, focusing on the transformational qualities of myths. I shall seek to contextualize some leading Tamil myths that are women-centred in terms of their historical and geographical specificity. A critical study of such a leading Tamil myth - the legend of Alli - demonstrates the gradual process by which an indigenous narrative is tamed to fit the patriarchal mould. In the process of its transmissions and transmutations, the myth does not follow a linear course but tends to zigzag between the image of women within the indigenous Tamil tradition and their absorption into the Brahmanic patriarchal stereotyping of women.

Alli, a popular ballad among Tamils for over one thousand five hundred years, goes through a metamorphosis in the course of four related narratives.

Alli Arasani Malai,
Pavazhakkodi,
Eni Etram and
Purandaran Kalavu.

Multiple texts exist of all these ballads including stage and cinema versions, some dating back to the early twentieth century. This article proposes to trace the zigzag movement of the Alli myth primarily through this quartet. This text attempts to use every available version - the oral (popularly sung) ballad, versions published at various points of time in history, authored by poets who have provided their own twist to the Alli tale, and dramatised versions of Alli both on stage and on screen. The available multiple texts however, by and large represent the voice of patriarchy. Although the nature and content of the Alli myth suggest a non-patriarchal origin, there are no extant versions that have not been diluted by 'patriarchal taming'. Therefore the recovery of the non-patriarchal Alli has to be done by fragmenting the mega-narrative of the 'Mahābhārata Alli' and examining the sub-text of these versions.

To conclude this introductory section, this study of a myth from the Mahābhārata is an attempt to contextualize the process of transmission and transmutation of a great epic that may have had its birth in the non-Sanskritic early Tamil society. The myth of Alli and her marriage to Arjuna, a leading protagonist of the Mahābhārata, breaks the mega-narrative of a great epic and brings centre-stage a figure who is wholly absent in the mainstream version. It therefore can be said to constitute a significant regional variant of a grand narrative.

The Mahābhārata in the Tamil Country

The story of Alli the Amazonian queen has been interpolated into the Mahābhārata resulting in the transmutation of what appears to be a local myth. It is significant that Alli Rāṇī (Queen Alli) herself does not move into the greater Mahābhārata tradition but instead it is the great epic which moves southwards sucking into it many indigenous myths like the story of Alli. Thus the presence of Alli in the Mahābhārata narrative is confined to South India and she finds no place in the Sanskritic North Indian versions of the epic.

The Mahābhārata records its presence in Peninsular India in a period roughly corresponding to the Saṅgam period of the Tamils (roughly 3rd century BC to 3rd century AD). The great battle between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍava is referred to by the Saṅgam poet, Perunthevanar, who wrote the text called *Bhāratam.* According to the Chinnamanur copperplate inscription belonging to the tenth AD, the Pāṇḍya king Rājasiṁha II issued official orders for the translation of the Mahābhārata into Tamil. Specific myths and legends from the Mahābhārata are associated with the Pañca Pāṇḍava rathas at Mahabalipuram, the temple to Kṛṣṇa Pārthasārathi at Tiruvellikeni (Triplicane) in Madras and Vedambur in Thanjavur (Tanjore) associated with the Kirāta Arjuna fight.

The strong roots that the Mahābhārata epic took in the Tamil soil is particularly borne out by the Pañca Pāṇḍava ratha temples at Mahabalipuram dating back to the Pallava period in the seventh-eighth century CE. The site also has a prominent cave temple dedicated to Draupadī. In the course of the medieval period, Draupadī emerged as a major folk deity in the Tamil country with the temples to the Draupadī Āmmā being located in Chingleput, South Arcot, North Arcot and Salem districts. In many of these temples, her worship is very similar to that of Mariamman, and fire walking is an important ritual of the Draupadī cult. Similarly, Gandhārī Āmmā is worshipped by the Pallar and Pariayar communities, classified as depressed classes in the Tirunelvelli district[2]. The Tamils not only brought centre stage the avenging woman Draupadī, but also interspersed the story of Alli, the Amazonian queen into the Mahābhārata.

As has been pointed out, the Mahābhārata entered the Tamil cultural and religious stream in the Saṅgam period itself through Peruntevanar's *Bhāratam*. However this early version of the Tamil Mahābhārata has been wholly lost. The version that seems partially extant is the one written in the ninth century during the period of Pallava king Nandivarman III. This *Bhāratam* is composed in the Champu style unique again to Tamil literary tradition, being an admixture of prose and poetry. The available chapters of this Mahābhārata was collected and printed in 1925[3].

The best of the literary texts of the Mahābhārata is the *Villi Bhāratam* written by Villiputturar. This text has been ascribed to the second half of the fourteenth century. It is believed that the poet Villiputturar wrote it under the patronage of the chieftain of Vakkapagai, Varapadi Atkondan. This version is used in the one of the most popular forms of performing arts in Tamil Nadu—Villupattu. This Tamil epic concludes with the tragic events on the eighteenth day of the Mahābhārata war when Aśvathāmā entered the Pāṇḍava camp and killed all of Draupadī's children. The epic of *Villi Bhāratam* was extended by Nallapillai in the nineteenth century. This was a collaborative work with Murugapillai who together added eleven thousand poems to the *Villi Bhāratam.*"[4]

The folk versions and performances of the Mahābhārata in the Tamil country follow the late-medieval texts of Pugazhendi Pulavar. Among the most popular folk ballads are the ones centering around Alli who does not find a place in the mainstream Mahābhārata. However an unusual Tamil ballad centre-stages Karṇa's wife Ponnuruvi (this is obviously a Tamil name) *Masakkai.* The story is a take off from the references to the so called lowly origins of Karṇa as a result of which Ponnuruvi hates her husband but becomes pregnant through him because of Lord Kṛṣṇa's devious plot. The ballad ends with her acceptance of the great Mahābhārata hero. It is noteworthy that neither Alli nor Ponnuruvi find a place in the North Indian versions of the epic although their heroes are drawn from the mainstream epic. Another peripheral Mahābhārata character who assumes great prominence within the Tamil culture is Arjuna's sun Aravan. It is said that he is the offspring of Arjuna and Ulubi, a snake woman. The transvestites and hermaphrodites trace their origins to Aravan and the Aravan festival is celebrated in many parts of Tamil Nadu. According to the legend Aravan agreed to be sacrificed for the sake of a Pandian victory provided he was given a chance to lead a married life. Since no woman wanted to face the fate of a widow, Kṛṣṇa himself assumed a woman's form and spent the night with Aravan. The eunuchs celebrate this male-male union in meaningful marriage rituals ending in the lamentations of the widows of Aravan. This unique 'Little' tradition of the Tamil country which draws upon a virtually unknown character from the Mahābhārata, has drawn the attention of sociologists, anthropologists and historians alike[5].

Situating Alli in Tamil Society

The Alli myth in its various shifts and movements clearly points to a coming together of two traditions. *Alli Arasani Malai* combines indigenous Tamil traditions, which can be broadly categorised as Dravidian, and the Sanskritic, Brahmanical tradition, which makes its presence in South India towards the latter part of the Saṅgam age (*Kadai Saṅgam*). This cultural encounter was a long drawn process. Caste hierarchies were not indigenous to early Tamil societies which consisted of *Kudi*, a generic term meaning inhabitants. The *kudi* were economically stratified in terms of occupational differences but there were no caste hierarchies as such.[6] The Saṅgam poet Avvaiyar, a low born Virali (minstrel), of the Panar caste talks of her dining with the king at his table. Such instances of social egalitarianism in ancient Tamil society can be multiplied.

The character of Alli is reminiscent of the Mudinmagalir or the valorous women who feature time and again in the Saṅgam anthologies like *Pattupattu*, *Purananuru*, and *Ahananuru*. The *Mullaipattu* describes women carrying shining spears. T.N. Subramaniam, the historian of the Saṅgam age, points out that women bodyguards of the king called '*urimai surtram*' are referred to as being 'beautiful, courageous and alert', all the adjectives which were used to describe Alli Rāṇī.[7]

Alli was probably a local cult figure and the product of a society, which was non-patriarchal. H.W. Tambiah in his presentation on 'Pre-Aryan Customary Laws'[8] refers to many early Tamil practices such as romantic unions, marriages following upon elopement etc. He authenticates his statement on pre-Brahmanical customs by quoting the *Tolkappiyam*, which opines "After untruth and rapacity appeared, the Brahmanical custom of *karaṇam* (formal marriage) came to be observed."[9] P.V. Kane in his *History of Dharmashastras* suggests that matriliny and the use of metronomes was not confined to Malabar in ancient times but prevailed in some other parts of South India as well.[10] I would like to quote here the statement of the eminent Tamil scholar Thaninayagam[11] on the megalithic culture of Tamil Nadu:

> *"The only fact which is clear is that most, if not all of the Tamil speaking groups were originally matrilineal and even, in some cases, matrilocal"*

The fusion of indigenous Tamil elements with the newly emerging Brahmanical forces in the South is demonstrated in the Alli myth in terms of the locale and its characters. For instance, the gypsy or Kuratti who is an indispensable feature of the Kurunji Tinai or the hilly tract according to the eco-type created by the ancient text *Tolkappiyam*, is present in the Alli stories.[12] In *Alli Arasani Malai* Kṛṣṇa appears as a gypsy singing of fertility of the Tamil country and recommends a charm to Arjuna to win the heart of the reluctant Alli.

The transformation of this quasi-tribal society into a caste-based society was largely the influence of Brahmins leading to Sanskritization. Patriarchy, which lies at the root of man's power and woman's subordination, was a logical concomitant of Brahmanization and Sanskritization. Brahmanical notions of purity and pollution created untouchability and the distancing of those castes which performed menial services. At the same time, the notion of pollution also marginalised women both ritually and socially. The act of giving birth as well as her monthly menstrual cycles rendered a woman impure. Male canonical writers assigned ascriptive and prescriptive roles to women that would enable man's control over women, in both sexual and social terms. The myth of Alli and its fusion into the Mahābhārata epic has to be viewed in terms of this transformational phase of Tamil society.

The legend of Alli has as its locale the Pāṇḍyamandalam region with Madurai as the focal point. The location of this myth in Madurai becomes extremely significant since the historical course of Madurai foregrounds the kind of power politics that has generated the Alli myth. The association of women with political power in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom (in striking contrast to other regions where male control over the state is unquestioned) can be seen in other origin legends which seem to bear no direct connection with Alli. According to oral tradition, a woman founded the Pāṇḍyan kingdom. The Buddhist text *Mahāvaṁsa* refers to a Pāṇḍyan queen who became the wife of Vijaya of Sri Lanka. Nilakanta Shastri in his book *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom* suggests a possible connection with the story of Alli's marriage to Arjuna who is also known by the name of 'Vijaya'.[13] Even more seminal to the contextualisation of Alli in terms of gender and political power is the religious mythology that revolves around Meenakshi, the divine ruler of Madurai and her marriage to Śiva called Sundaresvara.

Madurai is among the oldest cities to figure in the hagiographies and literary texts of Tamil Nadu. It constitutes the dramatic setting of Ilango Adigal's *Śilappādikāram* (a late-Saṅgam text) in which the heroine Kannagi avenges the royal miscarriage of justice leading to her husband's execution by burning the city of Madurai. The city is described at length as the commercial and cultural heart of the country. Given the glory and prosperity attached to the hoary kingdom of Madurai, the importance of gaining control over Madurai becomes self- evident. Madurai's historic past foregrounds the Meenakshi legend.

Kulaśekhara Pāṇḍya was responsible for constructing the city of Madurai on the sacred site of a Śiva *liṅga* making possible the matrimonial alliance cementing the sacred power symbolized in Śiva and the secular power of the imperial Pāṇḍyas. Malayathuvasa Pāṇḍya who came in the lineage of Kulaśekhara, was childless. He tried to remedy the situation by the performance of *parivelvi* i.e. horse sacrifice. The king's efforts failed to give him an heir but bestowed on him powers, which challenged the supremacy of Indra, the God of Gods. Seeing his own position being challenged Indra assured the king of a progeny if he performed the sacrifice known as *putra kāmeṣṭi yāga*. The result of this sacrifice was a three- year old daughter with the freakish feature of three breasts. The peculiar appearance of this girl born to rule over a kingdom greatly depressed Malayathuvasa Pāṇḍya who prayed to Śiva. The *Tiruvilayadal Puranam* which is the *Sthalapurāṇa* (an account of the sacred geography) of Madurai records the response of Śiva in the following canto:

> O King! Treat your daughter as though she were a son:
>
> Perform for her all the rites as specified in the Vedas.
> Give her the name 'Tadatakal' and crown her.
> And when this woman, whose form is golden, meets her Lord,
> One of her (three) breasts will disappear.[14]

The *Sthalapurāṇa* reflects the uneasy tension that existed between the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical Tamil traditions. While the choice of the ruling sex seems to harp back to the indigenous traditions of the Pandiamandalam, *putra kāmeṣti yāga* which enabled her birth is entirely Brahmanical. Patriarchal values once again get reflected in the peculiar myth about the third breast of Meenakshi which rendered her unfeminine but thereby more suitable for governance. In the canto called *'tirumana paṭalam'* or 'the marriage episode', Meenakshi encounters Soma-sundaresvarar and gets married to him. This alliance between Siva and Śakti represented in the form of Meenakshi made the Pāṇḍyan kingdom politically invincible since cosmic power combined with secular power, the cementing of the sacred and the secular which has been the cornerstone of every instance of state formation in South India. The alliance however was slanted heavily in favour of Meenakshi which is borne out by a popular saying in Tamil Nadu that is used to describe the nature of gender dominance within a marriage. Relatives and wedding guests mischievously ask whether Meenakshi will rule in the household or Naṭarāja (the sacred site of Chidambaram is dominated by the presence of Naṭarāja) who established his superiority over his female consort! It is in the light of the *sthalapurāṇa* about Madurai Meenakshi that the entire legend of Alli is to be viewed.

Alli Kadai - The Story of Alli

The story of Alli is an extremely popular one, in the Tamil region, and is either narrated, sung as a ballad or performed on stage[15]. Several versions of the *Alli Arasani Malai* exist, ranging from the composition of Pughazhendi Pulavar and Villiputurar in the Villupattu to the ones in the present century. The sixteenth century poet Pughazhendi authored not only *Alli Arasani Malai* but also *Pavazhakkodi Malai, Pulandaran Kalava Malai and Eni Etram,* all of which are ballads related to the myth of Alli. Chennai B. Ratna Nayakar & Sons, brought out a dramatic version of Alli called '*Alli Nāṭakam*' which began to be staged in the early part of the twentieth century but went into print later (Tirumagal Press, Madras 1967).

Alli was the only child of a Pāṇḍyan king who is not located in chronological time or identified by name. It is said that Alli's was an immaculate conception since she was found on an 'alli' flower at the conclusion of the performance of the '*putra kāmeṣṭi yāga*'(a sacrifice performed to beget a child) and was not conceived naturally. The recurrence of the notion of immaculate conception in the myths of both Alli and Perarasiyar[16] (the myth of Perarasiyar or Purushan Devi is a similar ballad from the Trivandrum region) could be a significant pointer to describe characters who either deviated from or transcended role models. In a situation where both women rejected notions of female dependency on the male along with concomitant ideas of marriage and female sexuality, immaculate conception would tie in with their social non-conformism.

The girl child Alli was sent to the Gurukula (traditional school) like any young man and became proficient in riding and the martial arts. The parallel with goddess Meenakshi who is also said to have been proficient in both martial arts and in hunting, is striking. In fact even today the dainty goddess at Madurai wears an apparel (resembling men's trousers) which society would term 'manly' but one that would befit the ruler of a powerful state.

Alli began her political career by defeating Neenmugan, the usurper to the Pāṇḍyan throne, in battle, and was crowned the ruler of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom. Neenmugan himself is credited with a curious birth. He is said to be the son born to a waterfowl (who had been a prostitute in a previous birth) transformed into a pregnant woman by the blessings of Śiva and Pārvatī. He was planted in the household of the childless Pāṇḍyan king who adopted him. The king suffered from a curse that he would have no children. Leaving Neenmugan in the palace, the royal couple performed penance and sacrifice for a progeny. Alli was the result of their prayers.

When the couple tried to return to Madurai with their daughter Alli, they found that Neenmugan had usurped the throne acting on his mother's advice and they had been exiled. When the Pāṇḍyan king sought refuge with his father-in-law who ruled over a tiny principality, the vengeful Neenmugan declared war on the state, demanding tribute. The text of '*Alli Kadai*' (verse: 45, canto I) says that Alli defied the tyrant and successfully led the army against him. Madurai itself acquired fame and glory because the valorous Alli destroyed the tyrant Neenmugan. Alli was subsequently crowned ruler of Madurai. The female heir Alli is clearly being preferred to the male heir Neenmugan who is imaged as villainous and greedy for power.

The story of Alli thus commences with her vanquishing in battle an incompetent male heir to the throne and wresting power from him. The subsequent course of the legend is also within the paradigm of contestations of power and the assumption of power although eventually taking a very different trajectory—the subsuming of Alli's unbridled power within the patriarchal fold.

The whole land is described as having been in terror of the Pāṇḍyan queen Alli. The *Pavazhakkodi Malai* says :

If you take the name of Alli
Even the bird will not sip water
If you take the name of Alli
The goblins (Gaṇas) will dance.
If you take the name of Alli
The decapitated head will chatter!
(*Pavazhakkodi Malai* of Pugazhendi Pulavar:1975:p.4)

In the dramatised version of Alli – *Alli Nāṭakam* – she is shown as a militant hero with a long sword dangling by her side (Opening scene: The stage entrance of Alli). An interesting aspect of the stage right upto the third decade of the twentieth century, was that men performed all female roles since women were not allowed to act (similar to the pre-restoration theatre in England). Male actors who habitually performed female roles had the prefix 'streepart' attached to their name. More often they were known by the female role they excelled in such as '*Valli* (the gypsy who became the divine consort of Lord Murugan) Vaithiyanatha Iyer', '*Nallatangal*[17] T.S. Kannusami' and '*Alli* Paramesvara Iyer'. In the context of the imaging of Alli this fact takes on significance because it is so much easier for a man to portray masculine qualities such as those attributed to Alli, the 'female king'[18]. The patriarchal twist to the imaging of Alli Rani (Rāṇī literally means queen) lies in the fact that the more ferocious her depiction, more telling is the message derived from her taming.

When Alli was ruling in Madurai, the much-married Pāṇḍava prince Arjuna set out with Kṛṣṇa, his friend, cousin and spiritual guide on a long pilgrimage. Starting from Mathura and Kashi, the two pilgrims reached Madurai wearing the garb of ascetics. Here an innkeeper, according to one version, and a merchant according to another version, acquainted them with the valour and beauty of Alli. The man describes Alli's victory over Neenmugan and her authoritarian rule in Madurai under which any slight lapse would cause heads to roll (*Alli Nāṭakam* :1967:12). Arjuna's sarcastic response at this point suggests the imaging of Alli as a "castrated male", a term used by feminist psychoanalysts like Julia Kristeva to describe social attitudes towards a non-conforming woman. He tells the narrator that Alli was actually a man in female attire devoid of all femininity. At this, the narrator treats him to a detailed description of Alli's stunning beauty and her many charms. He further arouses the spirit of challenge in Arjuna by saying that Alli is a man hater:

If a man dares propose marriage
She will cut him with her sword
(*Alli Nāṭakam*:1967:14)

Arjuna is told that since she cannot tolerate the presence of any man, all her governmental functionaries, both high and low ranging from military commanders and ministers to carpenters and other petty craftsmen were women (*Alli Arasani Kathai*:1987:31). Even today among Tamilians, an all female household is sarcastically referred to as 'Alli Rājyam'—literally 'the administration run by Alli'. In some versions however, it is stated that Alli as a practical ruler did meet with foreign ambassadors or men in her kingdom in an official capacity, but disliked any man coming in front of her without her permission. Such an offence was punishable by death.

In response, to the man's extolling of Alli's beauty, Arjuna expresses his ardent desire to possess her:

When will I behold her
Embrace, and kiss her
The famed Parthiban (synonym for Arjuna) *languishes*
When will we indulge in love play
How will I take her to bed
When will we become one?
(*Alli Nāṭakam*:1967:14)

Throughout this dialogue Arjuna's language is one of conquest and subjugation, not the language of love or caring.

The rest of the Alli ballad deals with the taming and domestication of Alli into a virtuous and obedient wife to Arjuna. Arjuna enters the Pāṇḍyan kingdom in the guise of an ascetic, presumably to hide his well-known penchant for beautiful women. Even today a popular saying in the Tamil country is 'Arjuna Sanyāsī' meaning a sanctimonious humbug! Arjuna tries to seduce Alli in various ways. He must however be seen to preserve patriarchal norms and marriage which was and is still considered a most important social norm. Thus, the poets who retold and reworked the Alli myth, emphasized the fact that Arjuna's seduction of Alli was followed by marriage. Arjuna was the exemplar of masculinity in the Hindu register because his romantic encounters culminated in marriage. A popular saying in Tamil is: 'One can even count the stars in the sky but not the many wives of Arjuna'. In the *Alli Nāṭakam,* Arjuna indulges in sexual foreplay with Alli in the guise of a transvestite calling himself Chengamalam. He also tells her:

Arjuna is the only fitting husband
For women born and yet to be born (!)
(*Alli Nāṭakam*:1967:23)

Arjuna cheats the man-hating Alli by penetrating her bedroom in the form of a beautiful snake given to her by Kṛṣṇa in the disguise of a Brahmin.[19] Alli in her innocence plays with the snake which eventually hypnotises her. The imaging of Arjuna as the seductive and aggressive male snake indicates the use of very powerful sexual metaphor. In the version written by Pugazhendi Pulavar it is said that Arjuna indulged in love play as Śiva did with Pārvatī, as Murugan did with Valli.

> *He rolled on her in the bed spread with saffron*
> *Like a mustard seed on polished mirror*
> *Like a bee fastening itself to a jasmine flower. . . .*
> (*Alli Arasani Malai*: p.106)

A picturesque description in the *Alli Kadai* says that the love play of Arjuna drained Alli of all her resistance making her feel drugged with passion.[20] Thus, Arjuna seduces Alli without her knowledge or consent. The process of taming Alli by a patriarchal hero is thus set into motion with the sexual conquest of Alli resulting in the loss of virginity which was believed to be the source of her power Alli realises that Arjuna's rape has also conferred the burden of motherhood upon her. The consequent submission of Alli takes different forms in the different versions. In the stage version the play ends when Alli gracefully bows to her husband and the other Pāṇḍava brothers who have by now reached Madurai and Gods shower their blessings on their union. However the submission is not so tame in the *Alli Arasani Malai* in which Alli is said to have fought a war with the Pāṇḍavas before capitulating.

The different versions of the Alli story deal more or less similarly with the theme of outraged modesty and royal fury which characterises Alli's reaction to Arjuna's amorous advances. It is said that Arjuna wore the garb of a rejected lover and resorted to the practice of *madal erudal* to proclaim his love in public (*Alli Arasani Malai: pp78-79*). This was an ancient Tamil practice referred to in Saṅgam literature where the lover rides a donkey and laments aloud his beloved's cruelty. Often the *madal* ended in tragedy as the spurned suitor was expected to commit suicide. Alli is shown to be vicious in her wrath. She orders Arjuna to be poisoned by snakes, dragged through burning sands and crushed by an elephant. When he survives all these ordeals she decides to offer him as a human sacrifice to her patron goddess. *Alli Nāṭakam* has a graphic description of Arjuna being led to the sacrificial block and the goddess refusing the sacrifice in indignation saying that how could Alli who hated men, expect that her patron deity would accept a male offering! (pp.42-46) Pugazhendi Pulavar however does not refer to the human sacrifice incident.

Irrespective of the trajectories they may take, the Alli ballads have as their common thrust, the gradual taming of Alli to fit the patriarchal role model of an ideal woman/ wife. The transformation of Alli from a valorous ruler to a tame housewife constitutes the climax of all the various extant versions of the Alli myth. Pugazhendi Pulavar, the sixteenth century author of *Alli Arasani Malai* holds up the submission of Alli to Arjuna as a moral lesson which all right thinking women should draw - that a woman's ultimate destiny is fulfilled only as a wife and a mother. With the changeover from being a 'castrated male' to a 'chaste wife' Alli's transformation is complete. The extent to which patriarchy and Brahmanization has seeped into Tamil society is demonstrated by the fact that 'Alli' is a term used in common parlance for a eunuch! The term is also used in middle class homes for young girls behaving like 'tom boys'. On a personal note, I remember being told in my childhood 'not to act like Alli'. The moral is obvious. A bold and courageous girl, however beautiful, cannot be regarded as feminine or even as female.

The story of Alli after her marriage to Arjuna is continued in three related ballads *avazhakkodi Malai, Pulandaran Kalavu Malai and Eni Etram.*

Pavazhakkodi was another princess, who became the victim of Arjuna's desire. The ballad begins with Alli's son Pulandaran crying for a toy chariot made of coral. The ballad says that the queen was helpless in the matter of fulfilling his wish. Arjuna however, set out in search of coral and came upon the princess Pavazhakkodi, literally the coral creeper, in the Themboor country. Arjuna who had seduced Alli as a snake now entered the bedroom of Pavazhakkodi as a swan and made a conquest of her. Another wife of Arjuna called Minnoliyal refused to live with Arjuna because of her dislike of him. However, Draupadī invited all the wives of Arjuna for a feast at which Alli and Draupadī persuaded Minnoliyal to break her vow and fulfil her conjugal obligations towards Arjuna. It is clear that Alli had not only submitted to patriarchal norms but had become co-opted to the extent of enforcing these norms on other women.

Eni Etram is the story of how Alli avenges the humiliations heaped on the Pāṇḍavas by Duryodana and his audacious and immoral advances towards Subhadrā, wife of Arjuna. She summons the best craft persons in her kingdom.[21] They are asked to fashion a ladder consisting of ten steps. The life like images of the various queens of Arjuna, including Alli, Pavazhakkodi and Draupadī, were to be set up on each step with the image of Subhadrā being placed right on top. Nails are ingeniously hid in the ladder in order to nail Duryodana on it. Alli proclaims that her elaborate trap is intended to avenge the humiliations suffered by the Pāṇḍavas and Duryodana's audacity in disrobing Draupadī and coveting Subhadrā.

Alli's meticulous plan is successfully carried out. The love struck Duryodhana is nailed on the ladder and is mocked at and humiliated by Alli. She parades him through the streets of Madurai. He is finally spared his life at the intervention of Kṛṣṇa. As with the other Alli ballads this one also ends when the Pāṇḍava princes come to Madurai and Alli, the Pāṇḍyan queen is united with Arjuna, the *Mahābhārata* hero. This ballad shows the degree of Alli's complicity in aiding and abetting Arjuna in his romantic exploits and in preserving his self-image as a virile lover. Alli is willing to go to any extent either to procure a new wife for Arjuna or to protect his exclusive right over his existing wives.

A politically significant aspect of Arjuna's conquest, subjugation and subsequent co-option of the reluctant women in the various ballads woven around him, is that these women were either heirs to the throne or rulers of some kingdom or the other. Hence every instance of Arjuna's sexual triumph also constituted a political victory and the assimilation of one more independent kingdom (governed by a woman) into the Pāṇḍava empire.

Pulandaran Kalavu Malai is the sequel to the Alli trilogy and deals with the marriage of Pulandaran. The marriage was between cross cousins in which Pulandaran , the son of Alli, marries Duryodhana's sister's daughter. The son of Alli and Arjuna is unacceptable to the Kauravas and the resultant tensions and their resolution forms the theme of this ballad. The story of Pulandaran already finds mention in the *Eni Etram* when Sahadeva reports to his brother Alli's anger that Pulandaran's wife Kalandhari (Duryodana's sister Durjata's daughter) is seven months pregnant but forcibly kept prisoner by Duryodana. Alli is not allowed to perform '*seemantham*' for her daughter-in-law, which is an essential ritual for childbirth. On the contrary Kalandhari is accused of immoral conduct and condemned to death. Unlike the other Alli ballads which are largely located in Madurai and nearabouts, in *Pulandaran Kalavu Malai* Alli invades Hastinapur and rescues Kalandhari from a gruesome death. The ballad makes it clear that despite patriarchal taming, the image of Alli as a fearsome warrior and powerful ruler does not change.

To conclude, the recovery of women's voices from myths and histories that are largely patriarchal in their scope and content, can be attempted in two ways. One method is to bring the marginalized (what we today call 'subaltern') figures centre stage. This is basically a salvage operation since women in patriarchal texts and myths have been imaged in terms of stereotypes shaped by Brahmanical canons. Thus

Indian feminists both men and women have re-opened these texts to focus on women like Draupadī, Gāndhārī and Mādhavī. Such studies highlight victim consciousness without however getting out of the essentially patriarchal framework of woman as victim and man as victimiser or alternatively woman either as Goddess or demoness.

The second method is to look at a myth that is essentially outside the patriarchal framework. What I have attempted in this presentation is to take up the story of Alli, a cult figure of ancient Tamil society which was initially matrilocal and therefore at variance with the Brahmanical - patriarchal discourse. Alli was a product of the Tamil social structure in which women moved without constraint between the private and the public domain. Tamil women played an equally important role with men in the economic sphere especially in agriculture and dairy farming. Socially, women moved freely among men and had the freedom to choose the man they wanted to marry. It was in this historical context that Alli evolved. Eventually as Tamil society came under Brahmanical-Sanskritic influence the historical transition got reflected in the patriarchal taming of the Alli legend.

Despite the taming of Alli, the myth essentially falls outside the patriarchal story framework. This can be seen in terms of the audience impact of the Alli legend. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Alli has been the favourite theme of many dramatic groups since the portrayal of the character of Alli was considered the greatest challenge to the theatre company as well as its 'male' thespian.

With the coming of the cinema, as many cinematic versions of 'Alli' appeared as there were of icons of chastity like Kannagi and Sāvitrī. The Tamil film 'Alli Arjuna' (1935) with K.S. Ananthanarayana Iyer in the lead role, the film 'Pavazhakkodi' with T.P.Rajalakshmi in the 1930 version and S.D. Subbalakshmi in the 1934 version enacting the role of Alli were the earliest cinematic representations. 'Vanarani' (1935) and 'Vindhyarani' (1950) with Garikipati

Varalakshmi in the lead role, were thinly veiled versions of the story of Alli Rani. 'Alli Vijayam' meaning 'The Triumph of Alli' was released in 1942 and its historical relevance lay in India's freedom struggle in which Indian patriots used the cinematic mode to protest against British imperialism, in this instance imaging Alli as a kind of 'Joan of Arc'. Alli continued to retain her popularity on the Tamil silver screen - 'Alli' (1964); 'Alli Durbar' literally 'The Court of Alli' (1978) and 'Alli Petra Pillai' (actually the story of Alli's son Pulandaran) in 1979. The recent box office hit 'Alli Arjuna' is proof of Alli's evergreen appeal. Pavazhakkodi (which is part of the Alli triology) similarly has multiple cinematic versions (1931; 1934;1949) including the one produced by Tamil Nadu's Ex Chief Minister, M.Karunanidhi ('Mandirikumari' in 1950).

This article has highlighted the transformational process in the context of the historical mutations of the Alli myth. The 'Taming of Alli' is two-pronged - as a character and as text. The endeavour has been to use alternative sources like folk ballads, which truly reflect cultural memories, to suggest a dialogic representation of women in historical Tamil society. Patriarchal taming of a non-patriarchal folk tradition results in tensions that cause mutations in the Alli ballad through time and possibly through space. The article concludes on the note that despite the taming of Alli and the patriarchal appropriation of the Alli myth, it has continued to excite the popular imagination of Tamils as an alternate role model.

SELECT TEXTS OF THE ALLI MYTH

Alli Nāṭakam (in Tamil) published by B. Rattina Naickar and Sons, Chennai, 1967.

Alli Arasani Malai (in Tamil) of Pugazhendi Pulavar, R.G. Pati Company, Chennai, 1972.

Alli Arasani Kadai (in Tamil) edited by the Manimekalai Press Editors Committee headed by L.N. Tamizhvanan, Manimekalai Press, Chennai, 1987.

Alli Kadai (in Tamil) ed. Dr. E. Sundaramurthy, Madras University, Chennai, 1989.

Pavlakodi Nāṭakam, (in Tamil) B.Rattina Naickar and Sons, Chennai, 1963.

Pavalakodi Malai, (in Tamil) R.G.Pati and Company, Chennai, 1975.

Duryodana Tunbapatta Eni Etra Nāṭakam, (in Tamil) B.Rattina Naickar and Sons, Chennai, 1971.

T.C. Gomati Nayagam, *Tamizh Villu Padalgal*, (in Tamil) International Institute of Tamil Studies, Adayar, 1979.

Pennarasiyar Kadai) (The Valourous Virgins) (in both Tamil and English), ed. K. Jayakumar and D.M. Moominaganathan; tr.by S. Mark Joseph, Institute of Asian Studies, Chimmanacherry, Madras, 1996.

NOTES

* All translations of verses from the Alli story in this paper are by the author.

1. Vide T.S.Rukmani, 'Folk Traditions Related to the Mahābhārata in South India' in K.S. Singh, edited *The Mahābhārata in the Tribal and Folk Traditions of India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla and the Anthropological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1993, p.195.
2. ibid. p. 238.
3. M.Arunachalam, *Tamizh Ilakkiya Varalaru*, ninth century, published by the Gandhi Vidyalayam, Mayavaram, Tanjavur, 1975, Part I, pp. 10-12.
4. An excellent essay on the Tamil versions of the Mahābhārata titled 'The Influence of the Mahābhārata in the Village Temples and Deities of Tamil Nadu' is to be found in K.S. Singh edited *The Mahābhārata in the Tribal and Folk Traditions of India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla and the Anthropological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1993, pp.229-240.
5. A recent book which deals at some length with the Aravan legend in the Tamil country is by Alka Pande titled *ardhanarishvara the androgyne: Probing the Gender Within*, publishers Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 2003. However a good introduction to this theme is to be found in the article 'Specific Folk Forms

Related to the Mahābhārata prevalent in Tamil Nadu' by Saraswati Venugopal, ibid., pp221-228.

6. The changing status of women in Tamil society with the growth of Brahmanisation and a transforming economic order is discussed in Vijaya Ramaswamy: 'The Kudi in Early Tamilaham and the Tamil Women from Tribe to Caste', pp.223 to 245 in Dev Nathan edited *From Tribe to Caste*, The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997.
7. T.N.Subramaniam, *Sangam Polity*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, p.289.
8. The article is published in the Proceedings of the First International Conference of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1966, pp. 352-461.
9. cited in H.W.Thambiah, 'Pre-Aryan Customary laws', ibid., p.356.
10. P.V.Kane, *History of Dharmashastras*, Second edition, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poone, 1973, vol. III, pp. 647; 657-659.

11 Thani Nayagam, X.S, *Tamil Culture and Civilization*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1970, p.6.

12. Kutrala Kuravanji dealing with the life of gypsies, is itself a very important musical genre of story telling found in the Tamil country.

10. K.A. Nilakanta Shastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, (Luzac and Co., London, 1929) p. 14 and fn.4. Shastri cites Geiger's translation of the *Mahavamsa*, pp. 59 and 61.

14. *Tiruvilaiyadal Purāṇam*: 1.4.25 cited in William P. Harman, 'How The City Became Sacred: Madurai in "The Story of Śiva's Sacred Games" ', *Journal of Tamil Studies*, 31st June, 1987, International Institute of Tamil Studies, pp.1-17.
15. The story of Alli is not the only myth that is about an Amazonian queen. An equally interesting parallel myth, probably a variant on the Alli myth is the folk ballad from the Kanyakumari district which narrates the exploits of a queen called Perarasiyar and her daughter Purushan Devi literally, 'The Male Woman Goddess'. In the legend of Alli her birth is through immaculate conception while in the myth of Perarasiyar and Purushan Devi, both conceive through the pollen carried by southerly winds from Sri Lanka.
16. The myth of Perarasiyar is provided in footnote 11. However this myth is confined to the areas which come under the erstwhile Travancore State. It therefore does not lend itself to the kind of study that is possible with the wide spread legend of Alli.

17. Nallatangal is another woman-centred ballad from Tamil Nadu, which narrates the tragic suicide of an impoverished young widow. Her ballad is still remembered in Tamil Nadu by women wearing green to commemorate the death of Nallatangal.
18. A woman ruler within the patriarchal set-up has necessarily to be portrayed as a 'Female King'. See for instance Cynthia Talbot's article, 'Rudramma Devi, the Female King: Gender and Political Authority in medieval India' in David Shulman ed. *Syllables of Sky*, OUP, 1995.
19. In the dramatised version *Alli Nāṭakam* the metamorphosis of Arjuna into a snake is changed for the obvious reason that a seductive snake cannot be depicted on the stage. Instead he enters her bedroom as a hapless Brahmin widow and eventually seduces her (*Alli Nāṭakam: penultimate scene,pp.66-67*).
20. Alli Kadai: verses: 1035 to 1940.
21. In Alli Kadai it is clearly stated that these artisans were women. One can presume that this situation continues in 'Eni Etram'. However in the dramatised version these are men for the obvious reason that it saved the producers the difficult task of arranging for 'stree part' actors.

10

Niḷalkkuttu and other Mahābhārata Episodes from Kerala

A. Purushothaman and A. Harindranath

This paper deals with some Mahābhārata related episodes in oral, ritual, theatrical and performance traditions in Kerala. *Tiruniḷalmāla*, one of the earliest poetic works in Malayalam literature, contains many references to the Mahābhārata episodes. The rituals described in *Tiruniḷalmāla* resemble *Paḷḷippāna* which is connected with *Niḷalkkuttu* (Shadow Piercing) dealing with *abhicāra*. This episode is absent from the known Sanskrit manuscripts of the Mahābhārata and well-known written retellings in Malayalam, even though Vyāsa has used the word *abhicāra* in Ādi Parvan in connection with Pāṇḍavas' birth.

So far, *Niḷalkkuttu* episode has been located in (1) *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* associated with *Paḷḷippāna* (2) *Kuṛatti Tōṟṟam* associated with *Teyyam* ritual (3) *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu*, a section of an oral Mahābhārata called *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* (4) *Niḷalkkuttu Kolkkaḷi Pāṭṭu* and (5) *Niḷalkkuttu Āṭṭakatha*, the literary text of a popular Kathakali play. The theme of *Niḷalkkuttu* is also discernable in the songs of *Muḷḷakkurumbas* and *Pāṇas*, aboriginals of South India. The summary of the episode along with the variations in different contexts are discussed.

The paper also gives summary of a few other episodes from *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* and other folk and oral traditions which are outside Vyāsa's Mahābhārata and points out connections with folk and oral traditions in other parts of India. The paper concludes with pointers on further work required on the topics discussed.

Preamble: Shadows of the Mahābhārata in Tiruniḷalmāla

Viyātan moḷaiyum pāratatteyoru kompkoteḷuttiṭṭumaven who writes with a tusk, the Bhārata spoken by Vyāsa.

This is part of an invocation of Gaṇeśa, in *Tiruniḷalmāla,* one of the earliest poetic works[1] in Malayalam literature. *Tiruniḷalmāla* also contains references to other Mahābhārata episodes (Kirāta, Kṛṣṇa as messenger to Hastināpura, Kṛṣṇa driving Arjuna's chariot, Mahābhārata war). Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, Vyāsa, Pulastya, Maitreya and "Vaisampāyana who recites Mahābhārata" (*maṟuttu pāratatteppeccum vaicempāyananum*) are mentioned (pages 109–10) among the ṛṣis who arrive to witness the ritual performed by Malayas (one of the aboriginal sects of Kerala) at a Kṛṣṇa temple.

There is a long invocation of the Goddess Kuṟattittaivam who carries a *muṟam* in her hand (p. 125) (Muṟam is a tool against abhicāra-commentator). The invocation has parts resembling *Kuṟatti Tōṟṟam*[2,3] in style and content. The concluding portion describes Malayas removing the sins from Kṛṣṇa's body. They enumerate nine sins of Kṛṣṇa, the ninth one being \the sin arising from causing the Bhārata war which lead to the killing of Kuru kings" (p. 134). In some aspects, the rituals described resemble *Paḷḷippāna*[4] that is connected with *Niḷalkkuttu* (Shadow Piercing) episode.

Niḷalkkuttu

The episode which deals with the *abhicāra* act of *Niḷalkkuttu* is absent from the known Sanskrit Mahābhārata and its well-known written retellings in Malayalam.

We note that, however, *abhicāra* is not unfamiliar to Vyāsa's Mahābhārata. For example, in the Critical Edition (BORI) of the Mahābhārata.[5] Adi Parvan, the word *abhicāra* occurs four times connected with Pāṇḍavas' birth. For relevant references to *abhicāra* in Vyāsa Mahābhārata, see the end note. So far, we have located this episode in (1) *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* associated with a ritual called *Paḷḷippāna,*[4] (2) *Kuṟatti Töṟṟam*[2,3] associated with the Teyyam performance of northern Kerala, (3) *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu*[6], a section of *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu,* a folk Mahābhārata once popular in southern Kerala, (4) *Niḷalkkuttu Kolkkaḷi Pāṭṭu*[7] of central Kerala and (5) *Niḷalkkuttu Āṭṭakatha,*[8] the literary text for a popular Kathakali play.

In the songs of *Muḷḷakkurumbas*[9] (Adivasis of Gudallur, Nilgiri Distict, Tamil Nadu) and *Pāṇas,*[10] aboriginals of Kerala, we can find traces of the *Niḷalkkuttu* episode. In a Dictionary of Folklore,[11] the word *Niḷalkkuttu* is mentioned under the following: *Kuṟatti* (1087), *Kuṟa Töṟṟam* (1091), *Kuṛāva Pāṭṭu* (1093), *Niḷalkkuttu* (2031), *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* (2032) (This is a part of *Kuṟatti Töṟṟam* sung by Pulayas of North Kerala, sung by Malayas of North Kerala as a part of *Kanneṟṟu Mantravādam,* sung by Velas of south Kerala for *abhicāra*), *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* (2902) and *Velan Pāṭṭu* (3329).

In a nutshell, the summary of the episode is as follows:[12] (Note that Kuṟavan and Kuṟaṭṭi are male and female members of Kuṟava, an aboriginal sect of South India.) Kauravas order Malankuṟavan to perform *Niḷalkkuttu* and put Pāṇḍavas to sleep. Under threat, reluctantly, he obliges. Malankuṟatti, wife of Malankuṟavan comes to know about it. She is enraged, performs counter *abhicāra* and revives the Pāṇḍavas. The episode indicates strong connections with Śiva and Pārvati. The *abhicāra* episode in five different contexts as summarized above have variations. In *Kolkkaḷi Pāṭṭu* only Pāṇḍavas are put to sleep. In *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* and *Kuṟatti Töṟṟam,* Kuntī is also put to sleep. In the *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* associated with the *Paḷḷippāna* ritual, Malankuṟavan and *Malankuṟatti* are replaced by Bhārata Malayan and Malayi. In this version, along with the Pāṇḍavas, Kuntī and Draupadī are put to sleep. In the *Niḷalkkuttu Āṭṭakatha*, only Pāṇḍavas avas are put to sleep. In this work, responding to Kuntī's prayer, it is Kṛṣṇa who revives the Pāṇḍavas. A notable variation is the absence of Kṛṣṇa in *Kuṟatti Tōṟṟam*, the two versions of *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* and the *Kolkkaḷai Pāṭṭu*. Āṭṭakatha also has additional characters such as Garthavaktra, Suśarma, etc.

Songs of *Muḷḷakkurumbas*[9] has the following reference to *Niḷalkkuttu*:

kaḷuveṟṟ vannuṟaccitu mannan kuṟavan
kuttuvān niḷalennu paṟaka rōmattāl
kuśumattoṭuṭe puṟappeṭṭaṅṅavaru
oru ṅṅum nerattu oruttana ṅṅupoy
kuṟattiye teṭi uratta kaṇṇakam vanam
kaṭannute kaṭukkena pōva vanam tannil
peruttoru nadiyatum kaṭannute iniyum kaṇṭīla
kuṟattiye perutta rōmattāl kuśumattōṭuṭan
iṟunpu neyyōṭu pulippālum paṟaṅṅatokke
orukki vannute kaṭukkane pōva vanam tannil.[13]

Songs of Pāṇas[10] contain references to Niḷalkkuttu such as

perutākina mahābhāratakathayil
paṇḍe kuṛavi periyoraran
piṇi māṟuvān utan tīrttoru vaḷi.[14]

An interesting narrative connecting *abhicāra* and the Mahābhārata in Kerala is found in Logan's Malabar Manual.[15]

The *Niḷalkkuttu Āṭṭakatha* performances were held at several places recently:[16] at Kalamandalam (2004), at International Centre for Kathakali, New Delhi (2005) and as a part of Kottakkal Chandrasekhara Warriar's sixtieth birthday celebrations. A performance was organized at Margi Ankanam, Thiruvananthapuram on twentieth December 2005 as a part of fiftieth anniversary celebration of formation of Kerala State.

We may enquire whether the *Niḷalkkuttu* episode with local flavour, which lies outside of Vyāsa's epic has any links with other regional variations. In the work of Alf Hiltebital,[17] we find that there is one Terukkūttu play called *Turōpatai Kur̲vañci*. In this play, during the stay in the forest Draupadī disguises as a Kur̲atti and goes to Hāstinapura and engages in fortune telling to collect fresh grains. Thus both in Tamil Nadu and Kerala we find some connections between Kur̲atti and Mahābhārata. Furthermore, in the Tamil Mahābhārata, *Villiputtūrar Pāratam*,[18] there is the episode of Duryodhana conducting *abhicāra* to kill Pāṇḍavas.

Māvāratam Pāṭṭu

Niḷalkkuttu episode forms a part of the oral text *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu*. Ullur[19] mentions that *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* has many sections. Some of the sections are: (1) *Viruntuṇṭeṭam* (Partaking in the Feast), (2) *Nāgakanniye Mālayiṭṭeṭam* (Marrying the Nāga Maiden), (3) *Niḷal Kuttiyeṭam* (Shadow Piercing), (4) *Pilāvila Par̲icceṭam* (Plucking of Jackfruit Leaf), (5) *Viṣam Koṭutteṭam* (Poisoning), and (6) *Cāmakkaññi Kuṭicceṭam* (Taking Cāma gruel). Sections (1), (2) and (3) of *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* are available in the book.[6] which is a collection of Malayalam folk songs.

Summary of the first episode is as follows: Kāntakāri (Gāndhārī) from Karunādu sends a message to the Pāṇḍavas in Kurunādu stating that she is ill and inviting them to visit her and have a feast with her. The message is given to *Kuñcu* Pīman (Bhīma). Kuñcu Tevi (Kuntī) informs the *Pāṇḍavas* that Kāntakāri had tried to poison them. Initially, she does not allow them to go. Pīman convinces her that no harm will come to them and instead of five, six of them will return. They leave led by the youngest, Pīman. On the way, Pīman overcomes many obstacles. Pīman offered parts of the food offered to cat, dog etc., and finds out that the food is poisoned.

In the evening Karṇa's wife informs Pīman about the arrangements made to kill the Pāṇḍavas. Later, Pūmāla, a maid, visits Pīman's room [as per the custom (?)].

Pīman discovers a knife hidden in Pūmāla's hair. He finds that other maids are engaged to kill the Pāṇḍavas. Pīman kills these maids. The Pāṇḍavas return to Kurunādu, taking Pūmāla with them. (Thus six persons return). In Pūmāla, we may discover traces of Hiḍimbi.

Summary of the second episode is as follows: Kāntakāri sends a flute putting a snake inside to the Pāṇḍavas. If they do not play the flute it would bring dishonour to them. Pīman volunteers to use the flute. Immediately, the snake bites Pīman and kills him. Pīman's body is bathed, kept inside a boat and is left adrift in the sea. The boat drifts away. In the nāga city (nāgapuram), there is a nāga maiden (nāgakanni). The maiden brings the boat ashore by reciting *mantras* and discovers the body inside.

She removes the poison from Pīman's body. The maiden marries Pīman and they have a son. One day the smell of burning of his palace reaches Pīman and he leaves nāgapuram.

The story of the revival of Bhīma by a serpent maiden and conception afterwards is known to Ālha singers in the Bundelkhand region (cited by Alf Hiltebeitel in the context of Barbarīka, Aravāṇ and Kūttāṇṭavar).[20] It is very intriguing to see the same story surfacing in both Bundelkhand and Kerala in folk Mahābhārata with no known written sources elsewhere.

Boat Episode

Another short folk song, *Bhīman Kathā*(Story of Bhīma),[21] begins with an episode in which, after the burning of lacquer house, Kuntī and Pāṇḍavas have to cross a river. The boatman asks for money. Kuntī does not have any money. The boatman asks to give a son. Bhīma asks Kuntī to give him away. Bhīma is asked to warm water for the boatman's wife's bath. Bhīma kills the woman by drowning her in boiling water. Later Bhīma catches the boatman and flings him far away. The rest of the song deals with the retelling of killing of Hiḍimba and Baka (Mahābhārata episodes). Ullur[22] gives a summary of the boat episode and infers from the last two lines ("those who sing and play this, will enjoy long life, prosperity and wealth") that the song was written for some kind of a ritualistic practice.

The boat episode and the episode in which Bhīma dies by snake bite are also found in the play songs of *Muḷḷakkurumbas.*[9] These songs describe many of the well-known Mahābhārata (such as lacquer house, Kirāta, Gītā) and Bhāgavata episodes. The folk Gītā (song 126, page 54) is very brief having six lines:

Then Kṛṣṇa said (many things) to Pāṇḍavas
To dispel their worries
To destroy their enemies
You should not worry
Like ignorant people.

Some Observations

It is difficult to date *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* whose author remains unknown. What is remarkable about the portions of this work that have survived, is the dominant female roles in the episodes. In the episode of 'Partaking in the Feast,' the Kuru-Pāṇḍava rivalry is handled by the queens Gāndhārī and Kuntī and there is not even a mention of their husbands. Female assassins are employed by Gāndhārī and it is Karṇa's wife who helps Bhīma. In the episode of marrying the Nāga Maiden, it is the nāgakanni who takes charge of the course of events. In the Shadow Piercing episode, Kuṟatti controls the turn of events.

Since all the narratives of *Niḷalkkuttu* are associated with either ritual or classical theatre performances, it is important to record the details of the performances of *Kuṟatti Teyyam, Paḷḷippāna* and *Niḷalkkuttu,* both *Pāṭṭu* and Kathakali, to comprehend further insights. We are told[23] that the performance of *abhicāra* on Kathakali stage is rich in details. The episodes mentioned by Ullur[19] as part of *Māvāratam Pāṭṭu* but is not located in the collection,[6] need to be recovered and published. In this context it is also important to collect and study the versions of *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* sung by other aboriginal communities of Kerala. In addition, the poem *Tiruniḷalmāla* which is a storehouse of important informations needs to be translated into English.

As noted by Alf Hiltebeitel,[24] a proper understanding of folk culture of India and their interrelation with the Sanskrit Epics, Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa requires close collaboration among mythologists, folklorists, historians and scholars of Indian literature, religion and anthropology..

Relevant references to abhicāra in Vyāsa Mahābhārata

Occurrence of *abhicāra* in the Critical Edition (BORI) of the Mahābhārata,[5] Ādi Parvan, in relation to Pāṇḍava's birth is given in the following. Corresponding śloka numbers in Nīlakaṇṭha Edition[25] are also given.

01104006 c *abhicārābhisaṃyuktamabravīccaiva tām muniḥ.* (Nīlakaṇṭha 111.6)

01109015 c *agastyasyābhicāreṇa yuṣmākaṃ vai vapā hutā* (Pāṇḍu to Deer) (Nīlakaṇṭha 118.15)

01113034 c *sa me abhicārasaṃyuktam ācaṣṭa bhagavān varam* (Kuntī to Pāṇḍu) (Nīlakaṇṭha 122.35)

01113042 c. *upacārābhicārābhyāṃ dharmaṃ ārādhayasva vai* (Pāṇḍu to Kuntī) (Nīlakaṇṭha 122.43)

Instead of *ārādhayasva*, Nīlakaṇṭha has *āvāhavasva*, which has more *abhicāra* flvour to iṭ

Also see, Alf Hiltebeitel's[24] discussions on *abhicāra* in the context of *sarpasatra* (p. 115), Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā (p. 129), Draupadī's birth (pp. 186-91), Pāṇḍava's birth (p. 188) and note 50 (p. 194).

The word *abhicāra* is also found in the Supplement to the Critical Edition (BORI) of the Mahābhārata, Ādi Parvan, in the context of Janamejaya's *sarpaśātra*:

010310010 *abhimantritenodakenarṣibhiścābhicārakaiḥ.*

For the entire passage which appears in the manuscript K_4 consulted by BORI editors along with the English translation by Satya Chaitanya, see Ref.[26] It is interesting to note that Janamejaya is asked to listen to Bhārata to absolve himself from the sin of *brahmahatyā* committed by him at the end of the snake sacrifice.

We may discover a refection of *Niḷalkkuttu Pāṭṭu* (counteracting *abhicāra*) in the first recital of Mahābhārata by Vaiśampāyana to Janamejaya at the end of the snake sacrifice.

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7. Based on the text of *Niḷalkkuttu Kolkkaḷi Pāṭṭu*, compiled by Kattisseri Appukuttan, copy provided by V.K. Sreeraman (2006).
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12. For details, see the article, *Pāṇḍavas put to sleep and revived through abhicāra: A Mahābhārata episode from Kerala,* A. Purushothaman and A. Harindranath, available on the internet at http://mahabharata-resources. org/variations/nizhaḷ.pdf.
13. The King decided that the Kuṟavan should kill them by shadow piercing. They were oragnising items such as hair, flowers. One went to the deep forest searching for Kuṟatti. Quickly go to the foresṭ In the deep forest, they crossed a river. They could not locate Kuṟatti. They gatherd all prescribed items such as long hairs, flowers, ant's ghee and tiger's milk from the deep forest. Quickly go to the forest.

14. In the great Mahābhārata story, in olden times, kuṟavi devised a method to remove the sins of the great Śiva.
15. The narrative is available on the internet at http://mahabharata-resources. org/variations/logan-excerpt.pdf
16. *Nizhalkuttu*, C. Ambujakshan Nair, http://narthaki.com/info/articles/art168.html
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11

The Epic Imagination and its (Dis)continuities

The Mewati Mahābhārata

SHAIL MAYARAM

In March 2004 the Sahitya Akademi held an International Seminar in Delhi titled, *Mahābhārata: Texts, Contexts and Readings* as part of its golden jubilee celebrations.[1] Two sessions were dedicated to the important theme of the Mahābhārata in the *bhāṣās*, including those in Urdu, Garhwali, Rajasthani, Kashmiri. Papers were presented on adivasi and other folk-epics too. To this array of poetic and performed texts, the respective chairpersons responded with the formulaic proposition of the complementary relationship between the folk and the classical, the *loka* and *śāstra*. The comments of Indra Nath Chaudhuri, editor of the Akademi's impressive volumes on Indian Literature, virtually ignored the preceding and interesting paper of Chandra Prakash Deval that explored the Mahābhārata-related literature in Dīngal and Pīngal. Kapil Kapoor, coordinator of another Akademi project on Poetics, similarly began and ended the session by stating that there was no contradiction between the *śāstra* and the *loka*. He likewise virtually bypassed Bhagwan Das Patel's impressive presentation on the *Bhil Bhārata*. My paper highlights how notions of a seamless continuity between the *śāstra* and the *loka* obscures ruptures, discontinuities and the specificity of regional epic traditions including the retellings of Dalit, adivasi and Muslim communities. It obliterates both the plurality of the epic imagination and of the many identities of the subcontinent.

If the Mahābhārata is the most extraordinary piece of literature ever, what is even more dazzling in terms of the sweep of the epic imagination are the many Mahābhārata-s, ranging from the Cambodian to the Afghan, the Persian (Fazl, 1358 H) and Urdu to the Mewati (for an account of the Sanskrit 'cosmopolis' in relation to the Mahābhārata—see Pollock 2006, ch. 6). Non-Sanskrit Mahābhārata-s draw upon the epic complex in a variety of ways, assimilating local concerns and structures within the narrative. These often have to do with state, caste and clan formation, the function of ruling class, and territorial struggles. What is scripted and transcribed in the *Pāṇḍūn kā karā*, the Mahābhārata of the community of Meo Muslims is the imagination of a polity. In an Austininan sense the performative (both as utterance and work of art) brings both kingly lineage and the kingdom into being (Austin 1975). The Mewati Mahābhārata spatializes the epic geography with respect to Mewat. The Mewat region is the area between Brajabhūmi and Kuruḱsetra. It also constitutes new temporalities focusing on the period of exile that took place in nearby Bairath and the battle preceding the Great War. The epic is colloquialized as the five Pāṇḍūn brothers and Daropada appear as (Meo-like) pastoral-peasants involved in their everyday livelihood of grazing goats and cattle, while the women carry their midday meal to the fields.

The first story in the first part of the folk-epic is the focus of discussion in this paper and highlights the distinctiveness of the Mewati version. The genealogy of the Pāṇḍūn (the *janampatrī*) transforms itself into the genealogies of Meo clans. The Meos thereby appropriate for themselves a kṣatriya identity, challenging the exclusive Rajput claim in this respect. Interestingly, what the folk-epic scripts is a kingdom minus kingship. Contextualizing, the text indicates the prominent thematic of Meo history which is the struggle for autonomy against political domination. Juzjani writing about the thirteenth century describes the Mewati leader, Maika, as the chief rebel and mischief monger. Ten thousand horsemen and a large army were dispatched under Balban in 1260 AD who, according to Firishtah, put a hundred thousand Mewatis (as the Meos are called in the Persian histories) to the sword (Firishtah 1864-1884; Luzjani 1864 (657-8/1259-60)) (1343 *h*). This was only one of the early chapters of the persistent conflict of the Mewatis with the Sultanate. It continued with the Slave, Khalji, Tughlaq, Sayyid, Lodi and other dynasties and up to the Mughal Empire. The Mughals were finally able to bring the region of Mewat under imperial rule in the sixteenth century but there was intermittent rebellion (Mayaram 1997b). The struggle for autonomy continued through the processes of Jat, Rajput and British colonial state formation as the Meos lived in uneasy tension with centralizing, revenue claiming monarchies and were constantly characterized as rebellious, as bandits and even as criminals by the British.

The Meos' own counter-striving was for a kingdom without kingship. In this respect their political institutions were similar to those of the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and the Jats, Ahirs and Minas, other tribal-peasant-pastoral groups in India who at best achieved localized and intermittent kingship (see Bingley 1978; Pradhan 1966; Rao 1977). Their pluralized polities (in the Meo case characterized as the pal system) incorporated ruling lineages that claimed territorial jurisdiction over their respective areas. Elsewhere I have elaborated upon this at some length as I think we need to get away from the historiographical mindset which evaluates state formation in terms of monarchy and centralizing trends and which treats the evidence of alternative political possibilities as indexical of political failure (See Mayaram 2003, ch 2).

The *Pāṇḍūn kā karā* is a narrative composed by two Meos, Sadullah Khan and Nabi Khan (the former's nephew) in the later half of the eighteenth century. It consists of three *karā* or parts called Kichakghan or the *Bhīm kā karā*, the *Girar* (or Bairath) kī laḍāī or the *Arjan kā karā* and *Kurukchetar kī laḍāī* or Babraban. Its language is a popular Pingal which is Rājasthāni *apabhraṁsa* mixed with Brajabhāṣā and it bears all the birthmarks of a long process of colloquialization. Implicit therein is a historical process of cultural exchange. Over a period of time the literary language of northwest India called *apabhraṁsa* that derived from Sanskrit and the Prakrit developed into Old Western Rajasthanī or Maru Bhāṣā. The *dohā dhani ratvai* or sung poetical romance draws upon metaphors and rhetorical devices reminiscent of the form and content of a much longer tradition of Dingal kāvya. Mewati *bāt sāhitya* is clearly linked to Rajasthani *vāt* (Maheshwari 1980).

The outermost frame of the *Pāṇḍūn kā karā* in the performance of Abdul Mirasi begins with the standard epigraph characteristic of the Mewati narrative. This consists of a few lines of verse, either in the *dohā* or *chappā* metre:

pahle to ustad manau
main larko adhin, jor ke sis navau 1
baithi ya hirda kai bich gyan ka kholu baksa
khuda hukam kuch hoy batao moku rasta 2
aisa pak subhanai bhula sabak batao moy
sifat sunau kairun ki jasu parja raji hoy 3

First, I acknowledge my teacher.
I acknowledge my subordination.
Hands folded, I bow my head. 1
With Her seated within my heart
I open the box of knowledge.
What He commands takes place.
He shows me the way. 2
He is pure
teaches me lessons I forget.
I sing the virtues of the Kairun
so that the people (audience) are pleased.[2] 3

Both prologue and epilogue can be seen in terms of framing convention where the performer and poet narrativize themselves respectively. The opening verses specifically introduce the narrator-performer. They acknowledge his Ustad, Allah and the goddess who is responsible for poetic inspiration. Here the narrator-performer rather than the author 'authorizes' the text-performance. The idea of lineage is introduced almost immediately: the lineage of transmission of the poetic *paramparā* i.e., the *guru-śiṣya* tradition of which the narrator-performer is a part; the goddess who is generative of all lineage herself but specifically of kingly lineages such as those of the Pāṇḍūn; and Allah tālā who is *pāk* (the Persian word meaning perfect, full, complete and pure that is quite different from the Hindu notion of *suddha* or purity). Typically both Mirasi or *gṛhastha* Musalman Jogi singers of this folk epic are sub-castes of the 'untouchable' Dhadhis. Both are devotees of the goddess who is consulted before the performance (Vaudeville 1996: 291-2). The Mirasis are distinct as hereditary bards of lower castes as the Bhat are to the Rajput.

Abdul Mirasi began his performance on another occasion acknowledging the '*kudrat kī den*' and reciting a *stuti* or invocation dedicated to Bhavānī Devī, the Mirasis' patron goddess known for her ferocious form. The Ustad (his guru, Bhure Khan) teaches knowledge and Allah shows the right way. To the devī, however, is attributed all inspiration. She is seated in the midst of his *hṛdaya* (a combination of *dil* or heart and man or mind) and guides him in opening the 'box of knowledge'. The invocation prepares the audience and sets the tone. The stated objective of the performer is to make the audience *rājī*, i.e., to please. Note that the audience itself is referred to as *paria* that is appropriate to the political community being constituted.

The version on which this article is based was recorded from Abdul and three other Mirasis. The four Mirasis were seated on a wooden divan with their *saj bāj* or instruments that included the harmonium, *dholak* (drum) and the *sārañgī*. They had begun by singing jas or *barhai*, praises of the different Meo clans in the morning and went on to sing the *Bhīm kā karā* through the night. A complete recitation of the epic can take three-four nights, but it is never recited in its entirety. The Mirasi-Jogi performers believe that a violation of this rule will put an end to their own *patrī* lineage. This could also have been an aspect of the terrible potency of the goddess, to which I will return.

Clearly the frame is a metaphysical statement that prefaces the text. In this case the epigraph disarms the listener suggesting the ambiguous possibilities of identities, Hindu and Muslim. The liminality of the re-scripted text/tradition and that of its practitioners/recipients mutually reinforce each other. The fuzziness of the frame leads one to think about the fuzziness of identities.[3] It anticipates and almost prepares one for the further subversion of modes of categorial understanding in the text. Indeed, identity assimilates the irreconcilable. God is variously referred to as *sain, har* and *rabb* and godhood is both male and female as it is the devi to whom *bhog* or food offering is made. In contrast, to Alf Layla va-Layla where the originally Indian frame is Iranicized, and then used to incorporate a wealth of Arabic tales (Harlan and Shulman 1999), the Mewati Mahābhārata has both an Islamic and a *śakta* frame.

This first *karā* is called the Kichakghan or the *kissā* of Bhīma that incorporates the '*janampatrī*'. Here the text evokes the form of the *sajra* (genealogy) or *jāti purāṇa* that unfolds in the very first stanza of prose narration: "In Hatnapur there were Chattar and Vichattar. Who are from Chattar and Vichattar? And Pand." To Panda is born Arjan and the line of descent continues through Aimnakafivar, Parakh, Parichat, Janmedha and Saismedha. From the last begins the segmentation of Meo clans many of whom trace their descent from Kṛṣṇa and Arjan.

This layer recounting descent like the 'once upon a time' creates a mood receptive to genealogy. Genealogy as form integrates times-cosmic and human, and space- sacral and profane. The lineage of the Pāṇḍūn who are descended from Kishan (Kṛṣṇa) *avatar* merges into the lineages of the Meos who are '*jaduvaṃśīs*'. This is a very important move since it is genealogy that establishes the social, and thereby the political status or its lack. It is in the last verse of this *karā* that the narrator returns again to the sentiment that the *Pāṇḍūn* continue to be, as their descendants live on:

The story of Bhīma is over and the śāyar (poet) says:
satrah sair sattasiya baras gaya hai bit
janai pandu ab hua sadalla jagat karai partit

Seventeen and eighty-seven-so many years have passed.
Sadulla says that so the world feels like the Pāṇḍūn are living now.

They are alive in the flesh and blood of the present generation of Meos through the Jadu/Tomar *vaṃśa* or the line of patrilineal descent.

The theory of folklore has conventionally regarded oral traditions as undated and anonymous.[4] Mewati narratives frequently conclude with a signature *dohā* that also specifies the precise year of composition.[5] The narrator-performer, who is always also an (other) author in the oral tradition, however, frequently steps outside/inside the text's temporal frame annotating it with authorial comments, predicting the future course of events or relating the past to the present. Indeed, a shift in episodes is often punctuated with a question or an exclamation, '*haft*, to *bhai* . . .' addressed to the audience. There are also the sighs, signals, *huñkār* (interjections) and other exclamations of the audience who might join in a chorus in any of the well known *dohās*.

The performance eclipses women who might be part of the audience, but always on the sidelines and who are always silent! Also invisibilized in the performance is the mode of production of the cultural text. The tradition itself presupposes the patron-performer relation of *jajmānī* that incorporates the giving of *dāna* prestations (See Raheja 1988). Only occasionally is the client-patron relation narrativized in the Meo oral tradition satirically referring to the stinginess of a patron or by celebrating the generosity of others. But in terms of the prestation it is always possible to make the transition from caste dominance, to chieftainship and to kingship.

Narrative Mahābhārata traditions then relates mainly to 'community'. There is, however, also the additional question of power relations within the community. The thirteen Meo pals and the multiple *gots* are the ideal exogamous and territorial units of Meo social structure. The *Pāṇḍūn kā karā* is obviously a text that privileges the lineages of the 'candravaṃśīs' which are the four Tomar and the five Jadu Pals that claim to have descended from Kishan (Kṛṣṇa) and Arjuna respectively. The *Pālon ki Baṅśābalī* outlines in greater detail the five powerful Jadu Pals of the Duhlot, Chiraklot, Daimrot, Pundlot and Nai-Nasr. The four Tomar Meo Pals are the Dairhwal, Rattawat, Balot and the Ladhawat. Marginalized to an extent in comparison to these nine pals then stand the Kachhawaha Meo lineages of the Dhaingal and the Singal Meo Pals deriving their lineages, like their Rajput counterparts, from Rama's sons, Lava and Kuśa. They are the 'surajvaṃśīs' or the Raghubans lineage. Also sidelined are the Meo Kalesa and Pahat-Nirban Pals who claim to be of the Rathor and Chauhan lineages respectively. Needless to say, the *nepaliyas* or Meos who have no pal stand nowhere.

But let us return to the telling of the story and see how a genealogical crisis is staged which bridges and frames the first episode describing the entry of Gorakhnath and his magical powers with respect to fertility. The narrator says, "Neither Anda has children nor Paṇḍa has children. Anda is married to Gandharan (Gāndhārī) and Paṇḍa to Kaunta

(Kuntī). Both live as sisters."[6] The continuity of the *patrī* lineage is in doubt as neither of the two brothers have heirs. This makes possible the opening of a window to the Naths and thereon to the goddess. The powers of the former over life and death are derived from the principle of feminine divinity. Guru Gorakhnāth comes to Hatnapur along with his follower Aughad, a young boy. They come from *Bagardes* which is possibly the desert in the south-east of Punjab (Crooke 1925: 354). We know that Gorakhnāth, the famous *avadhūt* and *siddha*, was possibly a resident of western Punjab or eastern Rajasthan.[7] He is said to have lived in the twelfth century and initiated a *sampradāya* called the Gorakh Panth (see Briggs 1973). The motif of barrenness and its cure by Gorakhnāth is significant in view of other hagiographies:

> When they (Gorakhnāth and his disciple) come to Hatnapur they see a garden that has been dry for a generation. The moment the guru sets his foot in it the garden turns green. Gandharan and Kaunta also see that a jogi, a tapasvī (worshiper), has come who has made the garden green again.

When Gorakh appears in *Puran Bhagat*, the similar reverberations of the conch cause the dry forests to turn green and the lakes to be filled with water (see Temple 1992). A similar trope appears in Jain stories and in a fragment from the *Siddha Ratan Nāth Charitamṛt* relating to Ratan Nath.[8] Yogīs in the Gopi Chand-Bharthari story have similar powers of reversing death and restoring life (Gold and Nath 1992). Aughad who accompanies Gorakhnāth in the folk epic could be an initiate Aghorī or Yogī without pierced ears or a child boy. The term is also used for one who has achieved true, perfect knowledge and experienced Brahman. We are told that the guru and disciple came to live at Hatnapur. What followed was a significant exchange between the two, a discourse on women, specifically on the courtesan. Gorakhnāth asks Aughad to collect alms but warns him, 'Only do not bring alms from a courtesan and a barren woman- "A *banjh* or barren woman is popularly believed to ruin the honour of a lineage" (Lalas 3, 2957). But Aughad challenges Gorakhnāth, 'How will I identify a courtesan and a barren woman?' Gorakhnāth replies:

patli pindi i satak si kaya halbai hal
baisa aur banjh ki lala turat pichano chal

Thin calves like sticks
a slim, slippery body."[9]
A courtesan and a barren woman
boy, you can tell from their walk.

The dialogue between the guru and his follower fleshes out a long debate within Hindu traditions as to the relationship between the ascetic and the erotic. Gorakhnāth's is a standardized, mainstream position on the courtesan as representing the sensual other, responsible for disturbing the *tapas* of the ascetic. This coheres with longstanding traditions of Semitic religions that relate saintliness and celibacy. Female asceticism is likewise seen as a contradiction in terms. Women are identified with social, familial and sexual worlds that the male ascetic must renounce (Leslie cited in Sax 1991: 32).[10]

There is, on the other hand, the counter-model within Śaiva traditions. The ascetic Śiva has no wealth and no attachments. He is a wanderer and beggar and consumes hemp. The Mahābhārata itself describes his love-play with the wives and daughters of the sages. But Śiva, as O'Flaherty elaborates in detail, is guilty of adultery, incest and profligacy (1973:226-233,235-44). His own wife, Pārvatī, accuses him of womanizing with respect to Gaṅgā, Sandhyā and Anasūyā. Needless to say, these are aspects of Śaivite (and Nāth) myth that are celebrated in narrative traditions as distant as those of Bengal and Mewat.

Aughad articulates this dissenting position on the renouncer and courtesan stating:

besa hi su har huya besa su hoga sab
besa hi su tu huyo guru ji besa su ho gaya ham

From a courtesan God has been born[11]
from courtesan all will be born.
From a courtesan you have come, Guruji,
from a courtesan I have been born.

The renouncer and the courtesan are brought together at another level. Both are part of the a social world that stands apart from family, domesticity and conjugality. But the courtesan is not the typical temptress or barren woman here. Rather the courtesan qua goddess is the bearer and source of life itself. Hence, also the idea that the erotic is but the most deeply spiritual.[12]

My own reading is of Aughad as representing the Aghor school which held dramatically different positions on divinity, death and feminity. The ancestry of the Aghoris is traced to the Kāpālika (AD 1000) from which they are believed to have separated in the fourteenth century. A modem version of the order is attributed to the ascetic. Kinā Rām, who lived in the second half of the eighteenth century. The sect recruits persons from all castes and both sexes. It is regarded as vile and disgusting by mainstream society because of its association with human sacrifice and practices such as *śava sādhanā* involving the swallowing of ashes following a funeral and drinking the urine of a dog {Parry 1994; Gupta forthcoming).[13] The *pañcamakāra* offerings to the goddess were *matsya* (fish), *māṃsa* (meat), *mudrā* (parched grain), *madya* (liquor) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse). The last was to be performed preferably with a non-conjugal partner, a low caste woman, if possible one who is menstruating and therefore doubly polluted.[14] Certain contemporary western Indian sects privilege incestuousness wherein intercourse might be with one's mother or sister and the participants drawn from multiple castes partake of male and female semen as *prasāda* (Carstairs 1961).

Does the courtesan represent what Shulman calls 'barren eroticism' who is the other of fertility? Parry maintains likewise that intercourse is preferably with a prostitute who is non-ovulating and infertile. As the man also withholds semen the copulation stands against reproductive ideologies and helps him acquire *siddhis* (Parry 1994: 91-92). Aughad, however, does not seem to adhere to this view distancing the courtesan as for him she is the source of life itself. The courtesan in this case is the goddess. Clearly Nāth discourse is concerned more with reproduction and fertility than that of the Aghoris. But it bears within itself such different strands as the positions represented by Gorakhnāth and Aughad. The dialogue between Aughad and the Guru possibly represents a debate between two *sampradāyas.*[15] The former's position is not only an attempt to argue and sustain a different perspective but points to the differences within Nathism with respect to celibacy and women.[16] The argumentative character of the disciple is worth to be noted. Later despite his guru's admonition he accepts alms in the form of barley from the barren Kaunta.

One might summarize the remaining part of 'the story' as follows:

> Aughad proceeds to collect alms. Pand's house falls on the way and Aughad plays the *nāda*. The sound reaches Gandharan in the palace who calls out to her sister informing her of the arrival of the yogi who camps in the garden. Kaunta comes bringing a plate full of *asharfis* (gold coins). Aughad tells her that he cannot accept it as he does not have the permission of his guru. He tells her, 'if you insist bring me a *ser* of barley'. She gives him the barley, and then follows him. When he asks her where she is going, she replies, to serve the guru. Aughad warns her that it is a difficult task given the severity of the seasons.
>
> Just when Kaunta reaches the crowd around Gorakhnāth he falls asleep for twelve years. She serves him well for twelve years. Wondering when his eyes will open she goes to swing on the day of the festival of Tij in the season of *savan*. Meanwhile Gandharan

> comes to the palace and asks Kaunta for the clothes in which she served Gorakhnāth. Just then the guru's eyes open. Assuming that she is Kaunta, Gorakhnāth gives her one hundred and one grains of barley from his cloth pouch and asks her to eat them immediately. She quickly chews them, returns home and gives the clothes back to Kaunta. Gorakhnāth and Aughad now get ready to leave for the land of the *devī* (goddess). Kaunta learns of this. She puts on saffron clothes, runs a *kos* or two to catch up with him. Kaunta protests that she has been cheated and she has got nothing in return for her twelve years of service. At this he gives her six grains of barley consoling her that her one son, Arjan, will be more than a match for one hundred thousand men.
>
> One hundred and one sons (the Kairu) are born to Gandharan, the eldest of whom is Jarjot (Duryodhana). Raja Karan sits in his court. Of Kaunta's five, the eldest is Duhitar. When they are seven years old Gorakhnāth returns. Bhīm encounters Aughar one day while grazing goats. Bhim asks who they are? Aughad replies, 'We are *faqirs*'. Bhīm challenges him to wrestle. Aughad tells him to first measure the earth and dig in the peg. And so:
>
> *paindan su dharti napi bhupat hua nares*
> *killi gari bhiv ne ja din natho basak ses*
>
> The feet measure the earth became great kings.
> Bhim digs in a peg
> the day the Basak was ringed.

Let us reflect on some significant aspects of the encounter between the yogī and barren women. On his way to collect alms Aughad encounters the house of Pand where he blows the *nāda* (conch). The transition in frames is signified musically. *Nāda* means *dhvani, sabda* or sound but also the *yoni* (Lalas, 2,2059). The power of the yogīs renders barrenness, natural and human, fertile. Gorakhnāth cures the infertility of Kaunta and Gandharan with his grains *jau* (barley). The grains render them fertile, and therefore, the progenitors of the respective five Pāṇḍūn and the one hundred and one Kairu brothers. The Gorakhnathi story is possibly a derivation from the Ṛṣi Durvāsā story of the Mahābhārata where the Ṛṣhi gives Kuntī a *mantra* in return for her service during his *tapas* that leads to her impregnation by the sun god and the birth of Karṇa.[17]

Besides demonstrating powers relating to fertility, the yogīs are also responsible for the initial kingship of the Pāṇḍūn dispossessed by their cousins as they dig in the peg, measure the earth and ring the serpent.[18] In this respect the narrative is the converse of the Gopi Chand-Bharthari story where the impetus is other-worldly and towards the renunciation of kingship and domesticity (Gold and Nath 1992).

The conquest and control of the Nāga serpents is evocative of Kāliyadamana of Krishnite mythology. The motif of the defeat of Basak by Arjuna recurs in the *Palon kī Baṅśābalī*. According to popular Meo belief, Bhīma's stride spanned the earth and he dug the *killi* into the earth at the exact center so that it hit the head of Vāsukināga and Śeṣanāga, two of the three divine serpents who hold up the earth. Thus, his one stride incorporates both the world and its upholder. '*Nathak*' derives from *nathan*, one who puts a loop through the nose, establishes control, becomes master and owner.[19]

Bhīma, let us remember, has asked Aughad to wrestle mistaking him for an ordinary *faqir* (an order of mendicants with whom the Nāths were often confused). Aughad goes and tells his guru that Bhima asks for his introduction (*parchyo*). Gorakhnāth tells him that this will be on the night of the Sumoti *amavas*.[20] On the appointed night the guru tells Aughad to fill the waters of the Jumna in the *kamaṇḍal* (brass vessel carried by yogīs) so that only the mud and fish remain. The river becomes dry and when Bhīma jumps into the Jumna he finds only mud there. The Pāṇḍūn tell him that he must have troubled some Yogī. Bhīma recognizes his mistake and goes and falls at the feet of Guru Gorakhnāth. Gorakhnāth gives them a blessing that none other than them will win the Mahābhārata war. Then he lets the Jumna waters go.

This story ends here (*hin kā kissā hin rah jav*). And so the performer signifies a pause. Identifying the genre as kissā. The *kissā* only seemingly ends here for the *parchyo* or introduction to the powers of the guru (usually done through the performance of a miracle), is followed immediately after the introduction to the goddess.

Let us revert to the beginning. Following the episode of the 'switching' of the identities of the two women and the disclosure of the miraculous powers of Guru Gorakhnāth, he significantly says to Aughad 'let's go to the land of the goddess' (*hu chal devī ke des*). The journey is a device frequently used to signify a transition to another frame (Krishna: 1988). As the *Pāṇḍūn kā karā* unfolds it becomes clear that it is Daropada who is the goddess. As Abdul's *arthav* describes it she reveals her identity when,

> The fifty-six children's souls, the sixty-four yogins, ascetics, satis and one crore deities collect on the other bank of the Jumna and say, 'the Pāṇḍu are born, but is there anyone who can destroy them. No one can dare destroy them'.
> Daropada, the devi, says, 'I will destroy them'.
> 'How', they ask?
> 'I will give them food in one plate and if they eat in one plate then I will destroy them. If they tell their secret to another I will destroy them. If they do not break my *svayamvar* I will destroy them. And if none of these three happens then to destroy them is not within my power'.[21]

Daropada is referred to by the use of the apellation *devī*. This derives from the later tradition of the Śākta Upapurāṇas such as the Kālikā Purāṇa or the Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa.[22]

The Pāṇḍūn are in the line of descent of Kishan (Kṛṣṇa) *avatāra* but the text repeatedly suggests its śākta moorings. The Nāth play their characteristic role as the priests of the goddess who mediate between kings/rulers and the goddess. The power of the yogīs over nature-earth, soil and water has been revealed in their *parchyo* or introduction. But it is derived from the goddess and is potentially transmitted to kingly lineages.[23] The goddess has already been introduced in the epigraph as the muse of poetry and music responsible for bardic creativity. She is then the cosmos, the kingdom, the ruling lineage and the epic. The goddess is responsible for the fertility of the kingly/chiefly lineage, for the kingdom's prosperity, and fecundity. Marglin similarly points out how the woman is rendered the model for the temple and kingdom. The feminine (*devadāsī*, goddess) then underlies conception of kingship and is at the heart of temple worship and also sacral ritual (Marglin 1985).

The centre is constituted early in the epic, and indeed presaged in the epigraph itself that refers to the *paria* or public and the *devī*. The *paria* constitutes the inter-subjective terrain of the kingdom for whom the story/genealogy/epic has meaning. While the epic explores a range of feeling and emotion, it is also concerned with the daily politics of status and of pastoral-peasant livelihood. The goddess is the cosmic underpinning of the kingdom. But the innermost is simultaneously constituted and displaced to the outermost frame as we have already seen. The margin is the centre. The inter-textual field of the *Pāṇḍūn kā karā* suggests the numerous markers of sovereignty. There is the genealogy of divine descent that generates the *chatra*, the sign of a king or kṣatriya-hence the derivation of kṣatriya from *chatradhārī* (Lalas, 2, 978). As Bhīma becomes ruler it is said '*citar kirayo bhīm*' meaning that there is a *chatra* over Bhīma. Both musicology and narrative are an aspect of state that have been neglected in both western and Indian political theory. Thapar describes *dāna-stuti* hymns in favour of patrons (often clan chiefs) following cattle raids. In return the bard was lavishly gifted with cattle, gold, slave-girls, etc. The *stuti* itself reiterated the right to be *rājā*. The *praśastis* or eulogies subsumed genealogies, which were important for their claim to kingly status (Thapar 1987: 26).

Just as bardic traditions became important for the Rajput kingdoms after the fourteenth century, the Meo warrior lineages patronized the poet-bard singers of praise and tales. Within their own counter-culture transmitted by the Mirasis, the Rajput is satirized and demonized. Did the Meos seek to substitute the idea of sacrifice with that of *dāna* in terms of the accrual of merit? The Meo oral tradition constantly extols the *dātar*, the giver of *dāna* as obtaining *puṇya.* Moreover, there is the relation between kingdom and the goddess who is the source of power. I find compelling Hiltebeitel's argument that there is an underground South Asian pan-Indian folk and oral Mahābhārata tradition that exists parallel to but independent of Sanskrit traditions. Many folk Mahābhārata-s were minted underground, he observes, among Nāths, Bairāgīs and yogīs and Satpanth Ismailis with inter-regional and inter-religious currency. Many of these texts composed between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries centred themselves on little kingdoms preoccupied with land and the goddess (Hiltebeitel 1999: ch 12).

Heesterman points out that the king is both sacrificer and one who is sacrificed (in battle). As the latter he gives his blood to the goddess who protects and strengthens the kingdom (1985: 62); hence, the wild, flesh eating yoginis who inhabit the battlefield where the Pāṇḍūn fight for their rightful claim: 'The hungry yogin screams/roaming the universe)'. The image of yogin is drinking skulls filled with blood and ripping apart corpses in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. The *kuladevī* is protector of the king and his family, of *kula* and hence of realm (Harlan 1992: 59).

Finally there are the Nāths who seek to displace the Brāhmaṇa. Nathism can be seen as a kṣatriya reaction to Brahmanism.[24] Nāths obviously bore a close relation to kings. Yogīs officiated as palace priests in the rite of Durgā pūjā which celebrated king and prosperity of his kingdom. Indian ascetics were even bankers and creditors and warriors (Bouillier 1991; van der Veer 1997; Gold 1995).[25]

Although the Meos aspired for a kingdom without kingship, the latter remains a significant concern in the narrative. A normative framework with respect to kingship is repeatedly expressed with respect to ideas of *rājadharma* and justice. The frame of *Bairath kī ladāī* (the third karā) anticipates a story about *satvādi rājan* or righteous kings. Gandharan expresses normative ideas of kingship in a dohā that derives from two popular *muhavaras* or sayings:

bar karu hai khet kun, khet bar ku khay
raja ho chori kari, ab nyav kaun pai jay

The fence protects the fields
the fence does not destroy the field. If the king is a thief
who will do justice?

Let us then return to the issue we started with of the relation between the Sanskrit and the non-Sanskrit Mahābhārata traditions. There is now considerable literature on the question. Several writers have seen vernacular epics as oppositional: Smith views their relation as little and great traditions (Smith 1990, 31, 46-7, 51); Beck argues that they demonstrate counterculture and make possible ambivalent and even negative attitudes towards Brāhmaṇas and orthodox values (1982, 11-12,35); Roghair maintains that they emphasize a 'local world view' that provides 'an alternative to Brāhmaṇa elite ideology' (1982); Blackburn and Flueckiger that the folk epics carry new meanings (1989); and Kothari emphasizes the incommensurable features between Sanskrit and oral epics as the latter have "a very different value system" that relates to "belief systems and group identity" and has to do with mythologies of lower castes and must not be seen as derivative from classical mythology (Kothari 1989, 115, 117, 119). Ramanujan suggests that each regional epic selects its own set of "iconic" continuities, but far more extensively works out patterns of "indexical" relocation and vernacularization and its themes of "symbolic" inversion or subversion (Ramanujan 1991). Hiltebeitel points out that this underestimates the nature of connections between Indian classical and oral epics, a relationship that is both complex and indirect. Both the regional oral martial epic traditions and the Sanskrit traditions are multiple. The former constitute a distinct genre and 'all make similar linkages between regionality, the peripherality of "little kingdoms," land, landed dominant castes, and the goddess of the land...' (1999: 6) In most cases they are not imperial, but anti-imperial. During a period of Muslim rule 'they re-plot the classical epics into regional pockets of Rajput resistance, seasoned with Muslim and especially Afghan and Isma'ili flavors'. They have to do with local history, land, kṣatriya norms for 'little kings' and chiefs and relate to the goddess, the Draupadī cult.

Each of these oral epics 'rethinks' the classical epics, re-presents and ritually reenacts them as they are 'translated' into vernacular and regional terms (Hiltebeitel 1999: 7). Regional oral martial epics can 'appear and sometimes be countercultural, non-Brahmanical and anti-imperial at the same time that they draw from primary sources of the cultural mainstream'. The oral epics are inter-textual with respect to both written and oral texts, so that Sanskrit texts are not simply a source of borrowing or contamination. Stories of heroine-goddesses relate to the genre of both the Sanskrit purāṇas—Sthala purāṇas (stories about a sacred place) and caste purāṇas. Hiltebeitel's approach then sees the regional oral epics in terms of their literary imagination and in relation to identities. Using Wittgenstein, he asserts that this imagination has to do with family resemblances. The regional texts themselves are a conjuncture of genres and traditions, constitute texts of ritual healing and also the political community.

To conclude then, there are significant continuities between the Sanskrit Mahābhārata and Mewati recension, including concerns such as lineage and land, polity and power. The Mahābhārata is about a specific lineage, the

Kuruvaṁsa and the war really was between Kauravas and Kauravas, rather than the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The battles are over territory and cattle (*godhana*) that becomes the booty, loot, treasure. The great epic is also a masterly reflection on *dharma* and *dharma yuddha*, outlining a dharma *puruṣārtha*. The folk epic is to lesser extent a realm that conveys values such as *satya* (truth). Sanskrit textual traditions and the Mewati folk epic differ in significant matters specifically in relation to the presence of Guru Gorakhnāth and the portrayal of Draupadī as the goddess. The goddess then is the cosmos and polity even as her power helps the guru sustain the kingly/chiefly lineage. Without them the king is as good as castrated and without potency. In the case of the role of Draupadī it shares much with other tellings such as the *Bhil Bhārata*. Draupadī is both *devī* and *dayan*, the *satī* who tells him he has not understood *satya* and *dharma*. She is the one who rules, both in heaven and earth (*svarga aur dhartī par*). The brothers recognize her as a guru. (See Patel 2002)

Sanskrit epic traditions provided a metaphor of the denial of the Meo right to rule against the imposition of Rajput and Jat kingdoms and later, the Mughal and British Empires on the Mewatis. Their claim to be kṣatriyas can be read as a Foucauldian 'principle of reversal' in the sense of overturning or subversion. It also suggests the very elasticity of the category 'kṣatriya'. Through its difference the folk epic constitutes a transgressive sort of writing that occupies a disruptive space within the culture.

Paradoxically this is also where we witness the limits of performativity. It brings the political community constituted by genealogy and memory into being. The performative speech act is, however, always in relation to and challenged by the speech acts of others and different political communities. Thus, statements cannot always function as deeds, as Austin claims (1975). The Meo kingdom, thus, never obtained on the ground and over a period of time the Mewatis were subsumed as subjects of the Rajput, Jat kingdoms and the British Empire. Its epic became a virtual metaphor of dispossession: as the Pāṇḍūn's aspirations are frustrated so are those of the Mewatis. Political desire continues to exist at the level of remembrance and performance. Paradoxically, the cultural performative only serves to emphasize how the politico-territorial performative is negated, denied, subverted in the very process of becoming.

NOTES

1. For the information and debate on many aspects of the Mahābhārata I am grateful to participants and audiences at the Seminar on Text and variation in the Mahābhārata-Regional, Contextual and Performative traditions, organised by National Mission for Manuscripts. Numerous conversations and communications have gone into the making of this paper, specifically those with Alf Hiltebeitel, Ann Gold, Bo Sax, David Gordon White, David Shulman, Dominique Sila Khan, Lindsey Harlan, Roxanne Gupta, Susan Wadley and Veronique Bouillier. 1 am deeply indebted to Mukund Lath, Francine Krishna and Shakuntala Bhansali with assistance with translation and above all to Abdul Mirasi and the several Meos and Mirasis whom I have had the privilege of interacting with. An earlier incarnation of the paper with the title, 'Framing epic and kingdom: the Mahābhārata of a community of Muslims' but with a specific focus on framing was presented to a Workshop On Framing: Narrative, Metaphysics, Perception, Israel Academy of Sciences, Jerusalem, 23-27 May 1999. Due to other pressing commitments I have had to defer my plan to publish an English translation of this wonderful Mewati text, but the work is underway and should see the light of day shortly. This work is part of a larger monograph in the making on The Hindu-Muslim civilizational encounter: The Mahābhārata of a community of Muslims. An early formulation appeared in Mayaram (1998) and some other aspects were considered in a draft paper, 'Of cow killing and identity politics: The goddess

and the guru in the Mahābhārata of a Muslim community'. Diacritics are used for most non-English words and names with the exception of names of castes, clans, communities and sects. Local usage has been retained as far as possible.

2. These lines constitute a *chappā* rather than a *dohā* which has a different metrical form and consists of six lines followed by a *nichod dohā* that sums up the mood
3. For a discussion of fuzzy identities see Mayaram (1997a and 1997c) on Meo identity. On Nāth traditions and Saivite-Islamic identity of the Bhartṛhari Yogis see Bouillier (1997); Khan (1997 and forthcoming) on the double identity of the Nizari Ismaili missionaries; and Parry (1994) and Gupta (forthcoming) on the Kina Ramis. Parry mentions that both Hindu and Muslim couples go to Kina Ram's *āśrama* where they visit his tomb, bathe in the tank of worms and take ash from the sacred fire which is a form of the goddess, Hinglaj.
4. Wadley (forthcoming) has argued that the anonymity makes it safe for the teller to speak out against injustice without accepting full responsibility since this is part of a tradition. I would argue that authorship actually enhances the character of the text as critique.
5. The signature has intertextual resonances. In the Indian music tradition the *bhog* or *ant kā ābhog* is the last part of the song. The term derives from both the Dhrupad and *bhakti bhajan* (devotional music) traditions. It is also present in the *sant vāṇīs* of Kabir and Raidas of the 14th and 15th centuries (see Nagari Das' collection of stories VS 2022). Another tradition called the *bhaṇitā* that mentions the name of the singer at the end of the performance also enters Mewati *bāt* from music. I owe this to Mukund Lath.
6. In the *Bhil Bhārata* Gāndhārī and Kuntī are twin sisters.
7. Personal communication, David White, 1999
8. Ratan Nāth reaches the Muslim country where there is a dry garden. He sits under a dry tree and because of his yogic powers the tree starts to bear fruit and birds sing melodiously. Seeing this miracle the gardener goes and tells the Badshah this event in detail. The Badshah does not believe him. Through his yogic power Ratan Nath sees that the ruler does not believe in the miracle and causes the *siṃhanāda* to blow. This transforms the ruler and all the Muslims of the palace into women. Scared, they go immediately to see Ratan Nāth and asked forgiveness. Ratan Nāth takes pity on them and says in his melodious voice

to the Badshah and his courtiers, ‘From now on don’t trouble Hindus anymore. Welcome them as guests. This is my order’. The Emperor thereupon gives him the title of ‘Pīr’ (Bouillier 1997: 69).

9. As these women have no children, they have slight, firm bodies with almost no flesh.
10. Gold discusses the yogi, Machhindar Nāth, led astray among women so that his disciple, Kanni Pavji, informs Gorakh that he is enjoying himself and fathering sons in Bengal (1992: 20).
11. ‘Hara could refer to either Śiva or god (Hari).
12. For a discussion with respect to Indian literature see Madan (1987).
13. Clearly Aghoris subscribe to totally different notions of death which are oriented to a suspension—rather than a renewal of time. Parry contrasts this to the’ good death’ that is a sacrificial act resulting in a regeneration of time and the cosmos (1980: 74).
14. What Douglas calls bodily margins that are normally perceived as dangerous such as faeces and menstrual blood are seen as otherwise (1966: 120-1).
15. Personal communication, Mukund Lath, 2002
16. ‘One might contrast, for instance, Wadeyar Dattareya quotations which disparage women viewing them as mere receptacles and orifices and a Vindhyachal Aghori interviewed by Roxanne Gupta who told her that everything begins and ends with the mother. Personal conversation, Oct 1998.
17. For a literary rendering of the epic story from the point of view of Kāma see Shivaji Savant (1994).
18. This is an old image derived from *vaidika* housebuilding rituals. I owe this to David White, personal communication, 1999.
19. Hamirdan Ratnu, *Piṅgal Prakāś.*
20. That is, they will reveal who they are on the night of the new moon that falls on somvar or Monday. The reference to the ritual bath of Sumoti *amāvasyā* indicates how regional practices are woven into the narrative. This is a particularly auspicious day that is extremely pure and increases *puṇya.* It falls in the month of *phagun* (Feb-March) in which the *snāna* or ritual bath is the ‘sin-destroying *tīrtha*’ and is highly suitable for making *dāna* or gifting such as of a hundred cows.
21. Hiltebeitel informs me that this is similar to the Mahoba Mahābhārata, personal communication, 1999.

22. Baladeva Upadhyaya, *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Varanasi, 1972). The idea of Draupadī as an *avatāra* of the *devī* is also found in the Shams *ginan* (Hiltebeitel 1999).
23. Gold elaborates a cosmology where yogīs hold the keys to power (1992, see ch 2). The Nāths played a major role in the Marwar kingdom of the early nineteenth century (Gold 1995).
24. Personal conversation, Roxanne Gupta, Oct 1998
25. They were also behind the substantial architectural activity manifested mainly in temple building. David White, personal communication, 1999.

12

Bheel Bhārath: When the Mahābhārata Incarnates Down Under

SATYA CHAITANYA

An epic of one culture incarnated in another is at once the same as the original and yet very different from it. It is not that its soul is the same and body is different. No, it becomes a different entity altogether, with a different identity, a different flavour, a different feel, perhaps even a different heart and a different soul, and yet it retains its original being. That is why such an incarnation is kind of a miracle.

Bheel Bhārath, the incarnation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata in the tribal world of the Bheels, is a miracle for its marvellous beauty, its unbelievable simplicity and elemental quality, and the ineffable charm of its rusticity. It is a miracle for the way it so perfectly reflects the world in which the Bheel lives: a world that is still shrouded in primordial mystery, where things are possible because you can imagine them, where everything appears clothed in a dream-like quality, where men and women walk on the earth without masks on their faces, where each hunger of the body and thirst of the heart appears naked, where the dark fears in our depths stalk us in the open.

The transmutations the story and characters of the Mahābhārata undergo in their Bheel incarnation and what these transmutations reveal to us about the world of the tribal Bheel are fascinating. It is intriguing, and entrancing, to see how the Mahābhārata looks when it leaves its traditional world and incarnates in an entirely different world – in the world down under, as it were; in the world of those who live on the fringes of Indian society, in the world of those whom our society has always kept either at its lowest rung, or perhaps even outside its boundaries.

The Mahābhārata war proper, for instance, which forms such a large chunk of Vyāsa's epic, covering four full out of the eighteen parvans, pales to comparative insignificance in the Bheel Bhārath. Here the war is a briefly narrated seven-day affair fought between Abhimanyu alone on the Pāṇḍava side and the Kauravas, who are seventy-eight in number in the Bheel epic and not a hundred, on the other side, though on the seventh and final day Bhīma joins him. While all the Kauravas die in the battle, Kṛṣṇa kills his nephew Abhimanyu on the final day while the young boy is briefly resting with his chin on the tip of his bow, for Abhimanyu here is the Dānava Īko who enters Subhadrā's mouth as a bumble bee and becomes her child in her womb, with the intention of destroying Kṛṣṇa who has killed his father Bhaiṣā Dānava [Mahiṣāsura] and all the other Dānavas. While the war is being fought, Arjuna is in Pātala, in the world of Vāsuki the Nāga, where he had gone in search of rhinoceros skin for making shields with and where he is killed by his son Nepjī, though he is subsequently brought back to life by Nepjī's mother Hīrāpath, who is Arjuna's wife and Vāsuki's daughter. But by the time he reaches back Hastināpura, the war is over.

Far more attention is given to the sacrifice the Pāṇḍavas conduct so as to release Pāṇḍu from his birth as a dog. The Pāṇḍavas had earlier conducted seven sacrifices but these had failed to prevent Pāṇḍu from being born as a common street dog for his sin of killing a mating deer couple. They now conduct yet another sacrifice and that is described in great detail. The sacrifice provides opportunities for the Pāṇḍava brothers to go on several Herculean labours, the most impressive among them being the errands that Bhīma undertakes.

Kuntī and Gāndhārī are twin souls in the Bheel Bhārath. While the seven sages are performing austerities, Śakti becomes an eagle and after circling the skies, flies down onto their trident and is killed on it. Gāndhārī is brought to life from the bones of the dead bird and Kuntī, from its flesh and blood.

The births of Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra too are different in the Bheel Bhārath. Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya, who too are sons of Gaṅga as Gāṅgeya is, commit ritual suicide to atone for the sin of suspecting Gāṅgeya having an incestuous affair with their stepmother. Subsequently their widows approach their stepmother-in-law and ask them what they should do in order to have children and are told to walk in the nude in front of Bhīṣma at sunrise. They do so and that is how Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu are born. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is blind because his mother covers her eyes in embarrassment and Pāṇḍu is impotent because his mother covers her private parts as she walks in front of Gāṅgeya.

During the *mahāprasthāna* of the Pāṇḍavas at the end of the epic, Kuntī too joins her sons and Draupadī. Eventually, beginning with Bhīma, they all melt on the Himalayas and becoming snow merge with the ice on the mountains – that is, all except Yudhiṣṭhira who goes to heaven, Vaikuṇṭha, where Kṛṣṇa receives him with open arms.

There is no game of dice played between Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira. And there is no attempt to humiliate Draupadī in the dice hall – something like that would be unimaginable, considering the stature of Draupadī in the Bheel Bhārath. She is here, at least in one particular episode, greater than God.

This paper, however, focuses on only two aspects of the endlessly fascinating different facets of the Bheel Bhārath. The dynamics of male-female relationship in terms of equality, dominance and submissiveness in the epic; and attitudes towards sexuality in general and female sexuality in particular in Bheel Bhārath.

This study is based on the text of Bheel Bhārath by Dr Bhagavandas Patel, who spent four years among the Doongri Bheels studying the epic that is an oral tradition among them and recording the narrations of the epic on four hundred and fifty audio cassettes. His contribution to literature in general and folk literature and Mahābhārata study in particular, is invaluable. The book has been published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi with an excellent Hindi translation of its prose by Dr Mridula Parik.

Eros Down Under: Women, Gender and Sexuality in Bheel Bhārath

Sexuality is a force that has the power to destroy. The Mahābhārata tells us through its tales and through its discussions on the topic. Śāntanu, the emperor of the Bhāraths, is destroyed in his old age because of his lust for a young fishermaid. His feverish lust for her leads to the disinheritance of Bhīṣma, his son, who was the crown prince adored by his subjects then and who had all the potentials of becoming one of the greatest rulers this land had seen. Śāntanu's son Vicitravīrya becomes, in the words of his son Pāṇḍu later, a *kāmātmā*, a lust-soul, and is killed by diseases resulting from overindulgence in sex with his two young wives. Pāṇḍu does the unimaginable by killing two deer he sees engaged in sex, whatever his reasons for that killing, and is cursed that he would die in the sex act. Later, unable to control himself while he was alone in the jungle with his beautiful wife Mādri, he ignores the curse and engages in sex with her and dies in the moments of his climax. Draupadī's sexuality is feared – it is the lust for her that Kuntī sees in the eyes of all five of her sons, referred to repeatedly in the Mahābhārata, that leads to her marriage with all of them. And having married her together, they are asked to regulate their sex with her so that they do not fight among themselves for her and kill themselves. The humiliation of Draupadī in the dice hall of Hastināpura at the end of the game of dice between Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira has high erotic overtones to it and very strong erotic reasons behind it. Eventually it is the lust-oriented acts of perversion done to her there that lead to the Mahābhārata war rather than anything else. There are several other tales in the Mahābhārata that speak of the evils of sexuality – the story of Nahuṣa and the story of Yayāti, for instance, being just two of them.

Female sexuality, says Bhīṣma in one of his discourses to Yudhiṣṭhira from the bed of arrows[1], is a monster that takes over the woman herself and leads her to shameful acts. Such is the power of lust, says Bhīṣma through the mouth of Pañcacūḍā the apsarā, that even married women born in noble families cannot remain within bounds. Possessed by lust, women can give themselves to the greatest sinners, the most deformed creatures, without feeling any shame about it – and women are always under the grips of lust and the fire of lust constantly burns within them, never to be satiated – in the words of the epic, as fire is never satiated with wood, as the ocean is never satiated with rivers, as death is not by consuming mortals. Women have no values to guide them by when it comes to lust, says the Mahābhārata; all that matters to them is that a man is available. And, if a man is not available, women will have no hesitation to seek sexual satisfaction with other women[2]. Beware of women's lust, cautions Vyāsa's epic, for it is worse than death and fierce storms, darker than the evil world underground, more terrible than massive conflagrations, more dangerous than sharp weapons, poison, fierce snakes; in fact, women's sexuality should be dreaded more than all these terrors put together[3].

The Mahābhārata, through the story of Nalayānī, a previous birth of Draupadī as the wife of Sage Maudgalya, tells us how insatiable a woman's ravenous hunger for sex could be. Pleased by her devotion to him, the sage asks her how he can bless her, and she asks him to pleasure her sexually by becoming five different men. He does so and a long time passes during which he recreates himself as different persons and, taking her with him to different lands and worlds, pleasures her there. Eventually, Maudgalya has had enough of sex and wants to go back to his austerities but Nalayānī is still not satiated and would not let him go. He curses her in anger and disgust and her subsequent birth as Draupadī is a result of this curse, and a punishment for her insatiable sexuality.

In contrast, women's sexuality is something beautiful in the Bheel Bhārath. Some women are of course to be feared, but it is not for their sexuality, but for other powers they possess. As far as a woman's sexuality is concerned, for the Bheel Bhārath it is an expression of her love, her delightful flowering, a celebration of the male and the female coming together, a festivity of sharing, a boundlessly exquisite thing that brings forth new life into the world. Nowhere in the Bheel Bhārath is there any condemnation of sex, any fear of it, or any rejection of it. Exquisite passages in the text describe many radiant comings together of men and women and one is moved by the loftiness and beauty of this celebration of life in the tribal text.

In the Rāmāyaṇa we find sexual initiatives by women condemned and punished by patriarchal men. Thus Śūrpaṇakhā is punished for proposing to Rāma and later to Lakṣmaṇa. She is treated brutally in ways a modern psychologist would without a hesitation term psychopathological: on the orders of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa chops off her ears, nose and breasts. In her case perhaps there is the excuse that she threatened to eat up Sītā alive to force them to comply with her wish. But in the story of Ayomukhī that closely follows the Śūrpaṇakhā episode in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa[4], there is not even such an excuse. She meets the brothers, falls in love with Lakṣmaṇa and proposes marriage to him and paints in words the pictures of their eternal love together that she sees in her mind. Without a word to her, Lakṣmaṇa draws his sword and gives her the same treatment he had given to Śūrpaṇakhā: he chops off her ears, nose and breasts too. The Mahābhārata society's attitude towards a woman's initiative in sex would not be much different either, though we do have there too the two examples of Ulūpi and Hiḍimbā where women do take initiative in love. These two women, however, represent cultures different from that of the central characters.

What we find in the Bheel Bhārath, on the contrary, is a complete contrast. Throughout the text, every single sexual initiative is taken by women. Men just yield to them. And there is not the slightest condemnation of this anywhere in the entire epic.

The first portraiture of sex appears in the Bheel epic soon after the wedding of Gaṅgā and Śāntanu. Gaṅgā is filled with a strange restlessness[5]. Her monthly period is just over. She calls her maids long before dawn. The urgency in her voice confuses them and they come running, wondering why they have been woken up from their sleep so early. Gaṅgā tells them if they delay it would be too late, there is no time to lose. She asks them to take spare clothes for her. Then she hurries with the maids towards the sea for a bath while the sun has not yet come up in the eastern sky. She bathes in the sea and sports with her maids in the water.

By then it is the golden dawn. The lord of the day has begun to come up in the sky. She puts on fresh clothes and walks back to her palace with her maids. Her steps are indolent as she climbs up the stairs to her cloud palace. There, in her palace, she finishes all the sixteen *śṛṅgāras* and thus ready, tells Śāntanu, "Come, Rājā, let's go to the orchard. Let's take a walk in the garden."

Śāntanu puts on his yellow dress, looking like a fresh bridegroom. He puts on his golden crown, his pearl necklaces and wears his slippers with serpent hoods. With bottles of saffron and musk in his hands, he climbs down the steps of the cloud palace taking leisurely steps. Everything is wonderful in the garden – the orchard looks delightful, with mangoes everywhere. They wander for long through the gardens in exquisite idleness and then settle down in the shade of the champa hung with flowers. They spend the whole afternoon in the garden, engaged in sweet, intimate talk.

Soon the sun begins to set in the western sky. Birds have come back to their nests. Gaṅgā tells Śāntanu, "Come, Rājā, let's go back to the palace."

Back in the palace, Gaṅgā warms water in a copper vessel and tells Śāntanu, "Come on, it's time for your bath." The king takes his bath and afterwards puts on fresh golden yellow clothes. He puts on his necklaces, combs his hair and does all the sixteen *śṛṅgāras*.

Gaṅgā cooks a five-course meal and serves it to Śāntanu in golden dishes. She combs her own hair and fills the parting of her hair with sindūr. After finishing her sixteen *śṛṅgāras*, Gaṅgā spreads the royal bed. She sprinkles saffron and musk on the bed. The bed now exudes the intoxicating scent of musk. She spreads soft flowers on the bed.

The queen is young and so is the king. They play a game of *chaupaḍ*. The stakes go up, the stakes come down. It is the time when the *yogī* sleeps and the *bhogī* [pleasure-seeker] is awake. The king and the queen have their sports of love lying in each other's arms on their bed. The night ascends, the night descends. And then the night comes to an end with the dawn peeping into their rooms with its thousand golden rays...

This is practically a word for translation of the lovemaking of Gaṅgā and Śāntanu in the Bheel Bhārath. As a description of a scene of love between a man and a woman, it can vie with any similar passage anywhere in literature for its charm and indescribable beauty. At the same time, the simplicity of the passage, the smoothness with which one step leads to the next, and complete naturalness of it all, the undefiled primal quality of their acts, are all unrivalled.

Gaṅgā here is a woman completely in tune with nature and, when the right time comes, she is filled with a desire to conceive and bring forth life. It is this urge to bear life that fills her with an unbearable longing, an unendurable restlessness. She is in command from the beginning till the end of this beautiful act.

Sex here is not a crude physical act of mating, nor a fierce battle of lust, but a beautiful communion, leisurely and unhurried, aesthetic from beginning till end, spiritual in its essence – an act of worship at the altar of life so that fresh life could be invoked within a woman's womb. The preparations are thorough. Gaṅgā bathes in the sea before sunrise, comes back and finishes all the sixteen traditional items of *śṛṅgāra* and then invites Śāntanu to spend time with her in the palace gardens. The sun has already set and parrots have found their roosts when Gaṅgā brings her man back to her cloud palace. She heats water for his bath, and while he is bathing, prepares an elaborate dinner for him. She serves the food in dishes of gold, and then gets ready herself with the sixteen *śṛṅgāras* once again. Careful attention is paid to every detail of the preparation of the bed on which they would make love. Flowers, fragrances are all used to create the right ambience. In this fragrant, beautifully decorated room, they sit and play a game of *chaupaḍ*. It is only then that the king and the queen slowly move into the acts of making love.

The word used for lovemaking is as beautiful as the lovemaking itself – *rasbhogg*, enjoyment of *rasa*. *Rasa*, Indian culture recognizes, is the essence of living; *rasa* is God himself – *raso vai saḥ*[6], as the Upanishads say. The sex act is not mere titillation, or an excitement of the senses, but something closer to *ānanda*, to the divine itself.

As we read the description of the lovemaking of Gaṅgā and Śāntanu, we get a feeling that this is exactly how love should be made – except that the term lovemaking sounds inappropriate to describe what they do. For what they do is a gentle floating into the intimate worlds of love, a smooth, blissful floating, and not a 'making' of anything. There are no sudden, hasty acts, it is like the coming into existence of an orchestra where everyone of the several elements fit in, in perfect harmony.

In Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhacarita*, there is a beautiful description of the bedchamber of Nala and Damayantī. The chamber, says Naiṣadha, is fragrant with the scent of *agaru* and spices. In the lattice windows are kept sandal and camphor and as the breeze enters the chamber passing through them, they fill the room with their fragrance. Lamps burn there softly, the oil is perfumed with champaka and other essences, which not only keep darkness out, but also arouse the occupants erotically. From the floor arises the fragrance of *kuṅkuma* and musk, the water kept in the room has been scented with camphor, the floor decorated with flowers.

The tribal Bheel Bhārath's description of the arrangements Gaṅgā makes in her chamber in her cloud palacę before she makes love to Śāntanu runs a close parallel to Śṛīharṣa's in the Sanskrit classic.

Also, the leisurely, relaxed pace at which the lovemaking proceeds, with its long preludes which create the perfect atmosphere, reminds us of Vātsyāyana's injunctions in the Ratārambha-Avasānika Prakaraṇa of the Kāmasūtra about how a cultured man should ideally proceed towards making love to his lady love. The differences being that for one thing, the lady love is in command here, and for another, the procedure here is far more elaborate than the Kāmasūtra prescription, covering as this does an entire twenty-four hour day."[7]

Let's now move on to another episode, in which love is not the coming together of a wife and a husband, but is, at least in part, forced on a woman by a powerful man: the rape of Draupadī by Vāsuki. Here again it is not a brute, violent, hurried ravishing that takes place, as it normally is in cases of rape, but a very leisurely affair after the rapist and the rape victim together create such an ideal ambience for lovemaking that we wonder if the victim is really a victim, if she is not in fact a very willing partner to her rape.

When the episode begins, we see Draupadī taking a nap one afternoon in her cloud palace. While she sleeps, her maids attend to her hair and as they comb it, one strand of golden hair breaks off, scaring the maids. They look at each other in fear and rolling up the strand of hair, hang it from the royal window. The wind sees the hair and is perhaps erotically excited by it, considering it is a strand of Draupadī's golden hair. Storm after storm attacks Hastināpura and the hair is picked up by the wind and dropped far away. But so great is the weight of one single hair from Draupadī's tresses that the earth is unable to bear its weight and cracks open. The hair lands on the chest of Vāsuki in the underworld, where he is taking a nap, attended to by his wives, the Padma Nāgins. The weight makes Vāsuki's chest quiver violently and he wakes up. Without losing any time, he starts out in search of the woman whose hair it is, ignoring the repeated desperate imploring of his queens. Eventually he reaches Hastināpura and sees Draupadī in the distance, gently rocking on her swing in her royal apartments. The light of the sun reflected by her golden hair falling in his eyes blinds him with its brightness. He reaches her palace and driving away her maids with his whip, whips Draupadī too before he recognizes her by her golden tresses. She asks him to get away if he loved his life. Instead, he picks her up and throws her on the royal bed, where she wails aloud. He commands her to warm water for his bath and a scared Draupadī obeys his wishes and not only heats water for him, but also bathes him. After his bath he orders Draupadī to prepare a thirty-two-course meal for him. She does so and as he relaxes on the cot, she feeds him the dinner in his mouth. Draupadī now asks him again to go away fast but he says a true man doesn't go back like that, he is going to spend the night right there.

When Arjuna comes to Draupadī's palace later, there is a fierce battle between the two men. Eventually Vāsuki ties Arjuna's hands and legs up with a single hair from his moustache and hangs Arjuna on a peg on the wall right in front of the royal bed. The queen now spreads a quilt on the bed, spreads flowers on it, sprinkles musk and other perfumes on it. The two of them play a game of *chaupaḍ*, exactly as Gaṅgā and Śāntanu had done. The stakes go up, the stakes come down. Eventually the two move to the sports of love on the soft royal bed. The heat goes up, the heat comes down. And Arjuna watches their sports helplessly from his peg. In the morning Vāsuki leaves for his land, promising to come back again in the evening. Before leaving the chamber to climb down the palace steps leisurely and mount his horse, he snaps with his sword the whisker on which Arjuna is hanging from the peg. Arjuna falls down on the floor with a thud.

Surprisingly, there is nothing in the episode that tells us that Draupadī did not enjoy the sexual encounter as much as Vāsuki did – the next evening when he comes, she has already heated water in advance and as he enters her chamber what he finds is Draupadī waiting for him eagerly. Equally surprisingly, when Arjuna falls on the ground with a thud from the peg and Draupadī leads him to her bed on which she was making love to Vāsuki all night long, seats him there and feeds him affectionately, this is what he says: "Draupadī," he says, "this is going to be a daily affair now. It is great for you, but as for me, this breaks my bones. How many more days will I have to put up with this?" And then he speaks of the need to find a way to kill Vāsuki.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, at the end of the war with Rāvaṇa, Rāma rejects his wife and asks her to give her heart to, and to go and live with, anyone she wishes for a far lesser crime than this. All he says is "there is reason to suspect your chastity. Seeing such a divinely beautiful and alluring woman as you staying in his own house, it is not possible that Rāvaṇa might have held himself back from you for long."[8] On a mere suspicion which Sītā vehemently denies, Rāma gives up Sītā. But here Arjuna has been an eyewitness to the all-night lovemaking of Draupadī and Vāsuki and, as we saw before, there is no reason to believe that she was not as eager a participant in the games they played in her bed as Vāsuki was. And yet Arjuna does not reject her, does not even have a harsh word to say about it to her; instead, he says it is great for her, meaning it is wonderful for her, it is a matter of great pleasure for her. And he complains of his own bones aching from the hanging! It is as though he is complaining of not getting the right seat to watch it all from.

The Bheel Bhārath's sexual ethos, particularly the ethos of female sexuality, is definitely different from that of mainstream India, from that of the Mahābhārata. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Gautama rejects Ahalyā and curses her for a similar offence, turning her into a stone. Jamadagni asks his children to chop off the head of their mother Reṇukā merely because she had stood watching the Śālva king Citraratha sporting in water with his wives and had delayed fetching water for him. There is no such taint attached to Draupadī immediately after the incident or subsequently. In fact, Draupadī's own behaviour does not show anything unusual has happened, that her husband has watched her sporting all night with another man in her bed.

Women's sexuality is definitely not as extensively regulated in the Bheel Bhārath as in the Mahābhārata society or in contemporary Indian society. Sexuality here reminds us of the pre-Śvetaketu days of Indian society, though by no means is it as completely unrestricted as in those days.

Speaking of the sexuality of the pre- Mahābhārata days, Pāṇḍu, trying to persuade Kuntī to beget children by other men, tells her:

> "Gorgeous lady, let me now tell you some facts about the ways of the world described by sages rooted in asceticism who know *dharma.*[9] In the ancient days, women were not held closed behind the four

> walls of their homes. Women of those days, oh lady of beautiful smiles, used to enjoy the pleasures of sexual intercourse as they pleased even before their marriage and the custom of remaining single-heartedly devoted to their husbands did not exist in those days either. Women having sex with several men was not considered a sign of *adharma* in those days, but was the common way of the world. It was universally held in that age that there should not be any kind of restriction on sex between men and women. Birds and animals still follow that natural *dharma*. The Vedas call this *godharma*, the *dharma* of the sacred cows. The greatest advantage of this dharma is that in spite of having sexual relations with different men and women, people can be without the defects of *rāga-dveṣa*, of attachment and hostility. Listen to me, you of radiant face, this method proven by several examples have been approved of by our seers. This method is still practised in the Uttara Kuru lands."[10]

Explaining how this custom came to an end in lands other than that of the Uttara Kurus, Pāṇḍu says this eternal custom coming down from time immemorial which women found highly agreeable to themselves came to an end through the injunctions of sage Śvetaketu. Pāṇḍu narrates the story of how Śvetaketu, who was a young man at that time, put an end to this practice. He says to Kuntī, "We have all heard the story of Sage Uddālaka. He was a great ascetic. Śvetaketu was his son. The ways of married life that we consider righteous today were prescribed by this Śvetaketu provoked by turbulent anger and jealousy. Let me tell you the reason for his anger. Once a Brahmin came to their ashram while his father was present there and right before Śvetaketu's eyes, the Brahmin began to take away his mother dragging her out by her hand. The Brahmin was an unattractive old man, his body infirm and decrepit, his eyes weak. He walked with the support of a stick. Sage Uddālaka saw this incident and closing his eyes went back into meditation but Śvetaketu felt furious at the Brahmin who was taking his mother thus away by force. He was also deeply grieved by the incident. Seeing his son in a rage, Uddālaka tried to make him understand. "Son," he said, "there is nothing here that should make you angry. This is the custom that has come down to us from the beginning of time. You will see this practice among all creatures on the earth. In every creation of God, beginning with birds and animals and including us humans, you will find that women are completely free and can enjoy the pleasures of their body without any restraints. Son, in the matter of sexual pleasures, men and women too are as free to act according to their wishes as cows and bulls are."[11]

Śvetaketu refuses to listen to his father and lays down laws regulating sexual relations between men and women through marriage. He declares, "From now on, the woman who will not be single-heartedly devoted to her husband will accrue the sin of killing the child in her womb. And the man who, ignoring his devoted, single-hearted, dedicated wife, goes to other women will also accrue the same sin."

The Bheel Bhārath seems to reflect the sexual practices of the pre-Śvetaketu days.

In the days of the famous sage Dīrghatamas, one of the greatest seers of the Vedas, too we had this different sexual ethos in India. Dīrghatamas was the son of the sage Uṣija and his mother's name was Mamatā[12]. Bṛhaspati, the priest of the gods, was Uṣija's younger brother. Once Bṛhaspati sees his beautiful sister-in-law Mamatā alone, and overcome by desire, asks her straight away to satisfy his lust for her. Mamatā is not in the least insulted or hurt by this, nor does she consider his desire for her to be wrong in any way. All she says is she is pregnant right then with Bṛhaspati's brother's child and he should wait for sometime and once she has delivered her child he can have her as he pleases as otherwise the child in her womb who is engaged in the study of the Vedas would be disturbed.

It is this freedom that women had in those very ancient pre- Mahābhārata days that we find Indrāṇī using in the Bheel Bhārath when she walks out on Indra because he does not stand with her when some sages who were guests at their home misbehave with her. Leaving Indra, Indrāṇī approaches the Kauravas and asks them to take her as their woman. When they refuse her out of fear for Indra, she humiliates them calling them cowards and eunuchs and goes to the Pāṇḍava brothers and offers herself as a wife to one of them. They too refuse for the reason that they fear Indra but eventually the fearless twelve-year old Abhimanyu takes her to his apartments and keeps her there as his wife.

Incidentally, the relation between Indrāṇī and Abhimanyu is, apart from other ways in which it is objectionable, incestuous. Indra is Arjuna's father and Indra's wife is technically Abhimanyu's grandmother. The relation between Arjuna and his Nāga wife Hīrāpath is also complicated: Draupadī and Vāsuki have been sexual partners and Hīrāpath is Vāsuki's daughter. Similarly, apart from the suspicion of incest between Gāṅgeya and his stepmother, the births of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu too are by incestuous means since getting pregnant by an elder brother of a dead husband is not allowed, even according to the rules of *niyoga* which was acceptable to the Mahābhārata, while the same with a younger brother of the husband was.

This difference in female sexual ethos we find reflected in the amoral story of Rādhā too in the Bheel Bhārath. She is the wedded wife of Kṛṣṇa in the tribal epic and she betrays Kṛṣṇa with a bangle seller. A day after their wedding, Kṛṣṇa leaves her, informing he is going to Dvārakā and will be back only after six months. Rādhā weeps at the news and begs him to take her with him, but he does not. The same day as Kṛṣṇa leaves, an irresistibly handsome bangle-seller comes and Rādhā straight away falls madly in love with him. She goes and spends their first night together in his temporary hut. The next night onwards he visits her regularly at night and they spend their nights together in Rādhā's bed. For his sake Rādhā destroys Kṛṣṇa's photo hanging on the wall of their room, wipes off Kṛṣṇa's painting on the wall, and gives the bangle seller the ring Kṛṣṇa had given her. Rādhā is shameless in her lust for her new lover and gives herself to him unreservedly. Later it turns out that the bangle seller is Kṛṣṇa himself in disguise but Rādhā had no way of knowing this.

It is interesting that Rādhā's maids who are aware of her relations with the bangle seller and do not know that he is Kṛṣṇa, do not blame her in any way for her betrayal of her wedded husband and for her adultery. In fact, from their behaviour one suspects if the maids do not secretly admire Rādhā for her courage to break her bond of marriage with Kṛṣṇa and seek pleasure in the arms of another man. Even Kṛṣṇa's reaction, when he later appears as Kṛṣṇa, to Rādhā's betrayal of him is told in tones that are more humorous than serious. It is as though even Kṛṣṇa takes Rādhā's bold adulterous escapade at the worst as a mild joke.

The tale of Rādhā's betrayal is told not in bitter or angry language, but in tender, loving words. No accusing fingers are turned at Rādhā by the narrator of the tale and even the reader feels only amused by the happenings, at least partly because, like the Bheel listener, he too knows from the beginning that the bangle seller is Kṛṣṇa in disguise.

On a superficial reading, the story of Rādhā's betrayal reads like something taken straight from the eternally popular footpath bestsellers *Tiriyā Charittar* and *Totā-Mainā*, the semi-literate collections of stories that vilify women and paint them in the ugliest possible colours. But the story has other dimensions that make it go well with the Bheel Bhārath, to which it is like an appendix, and on deeper analysis one wonders if Rādhā's free sexual fling is not rather in tune with the sexual ethos of the Bheel Bhārath in which women have great freedom and invariably take the initiative.

One also suspects that the attitude towards sex in general and female sexuality in particular reflected in the Bheel Bhārath has something to do with the Tantric influence on Bheel ways of living. The Doognri Bheels have definitely been influenced by Tantra, particularly as practised by the Gorakhpanthis, as is reflected in customs like pagchampī in which an inferior person kisses the toe of his superiors, particularly that of a guru. Unlike the Brahmin priests of the Mahābhārata who were essentially attached to the men and women were related to them only through men, in the Bheel Bhārath each woman has a guru of her own who is obviously a Tantric and frequently belongs to lower castes, which fact is specifically mentioned in the Bheel epic.

Also, several tribal societies do not share the sexual ethos of the mainstream Indian society; even some of the 'advanced' societies, such as the matriarchal Kerala, did not share the same sexual ethos as the rest of India until recently. In Kerala, for instance, particularly among the dominant and upper caste Nairs, it was common until recent times for a woman to have what was known as *sambandhas*, literally relations, with a series of men, all of which were temporary, though in rarer cases one of these *sambandhas* lasted a life time.

Whatever that be, the fact remains that while the Bheel Bhārath does not on any account portray a society practicing free sex, it does give us insights into sexual ethos that are very different from those of mainstream Indian culture and the sexuality, particularly female sexuality, portrayed in the Bheel epic takes us into a world where sex is not a guilt-ridden, ugly, monstrous thing that is the root cause of all man's downfall, but something tender and beautiful, something endlessly fascinating, a splendid flowering of love between man and woman that is far closer to the sacred than to the profane.

Created in the Image of the Goddess: Women, Gender and Power in Bheel Bhārath

The dynamics of the male-female relationship in the Bheel Bhārath differs from that in mainstream India and in the Sanskrit Mahābhārata. We see that gender, the socially constructed differences between the male and the female, is portrayed here in tones that are very distinct. The women we encounter in the Bheel epic are not exactly creations of a lesser God, lacking in wisdom and created with great imperfections, incapable of acting without male assistance, whose every decision has to be taken for them by their men. They are not women abjectly dependent for their protection on their fathers in their childhood and adolescence, on their husbands in their youth and middle age, and on their sons in their old age. In the Bheel Bhārath, the traditional gender construct of men being dominant and women being submissive or passive in relation to them is frequently absent.

In the mainstream Indian culture, power, prestige and an unyielding personality are usually associated with men and in the Bheel Bhārath, we often find female characters possessing these qualities. If, as Gerda Lerner puts it, "gender is a costume, a mask, a straitjacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance," these costumes, masks and straitjackets are different in the Bheel Bhārath. And, at least in part for these reasons, we find the leading women in the Bheel Bhārata, unlike the leading women in Vyāsa's epic, do not have shades of neurosis to them. They are, unlike in the Mahābhārata, quite comfortable with themselves, at peace with their social and psychological selves.

Anais Nin refers to Lawrence Van der Post, the Jungian psychologist and poet, in her *A Woman Speaks* and says "there is a beautiful part in one of his books where he says the Africans never suffered from loneliness as we have; they never suffered from the feeling of the meaninglessness of their life, as we occasionally have."[13] Reading the Mahābhārata, we have the perpetual feeling that the women there are very lonely – be it the fishermaid Satyavatī wedded to the old emperor Śāntanu or later the widowed Empress Satyavatī, or the bright and bold Gāndhārī wedded to blind, cowardly Dhṛtarāṣṭra, or Kuntī and Mādri wedded to their impotent husband or Draupadī wedded to her five husbands. Kuntī on one occasion specifically speaks of her loneliness when she refers to her life at Kuntībhoja's place after her father gave her away to him. Draupadī is nāthavatī anāthavat – like an orphan, though she belongs – all through her life and ends her life in utter, unspeakable loneliness on the Himalayas where she falls down towards the end of the pilgrimage and her five husbands walk away without a word to her, without a backward glance at her, without slowing their steps. We do not find such loneliness in the lives of the women of the Bheel Bhārath, nor do we find any of the women here suffering from meaninglessness in their lives, which too is the lot of practically all the women in the Mahābhārata.

Let us begin with the first major female character we encounter in the Bheel Bhārath, Gaṅgā, who is perhaps closest to her self in the Sanskrit epic. When we first meet her in the tribal epic, she is taking a bath in the river Gaṅgā, for which she has come up from the thirteenth *pātāla*, the thirteenth netherworld. Subsequently, she marries Śāntanu after rejecting his attempts to woo her in two lifetimes. The Bheel Bhārath builds on the unequal relationship the two have in the Mahābhārata and while Gaṅgā is a river goddess with supernatural powers in Vyāsa's epic too, in the Bheel epic she is awesome.

As per her conditions Śāntanu had agreed to prior to their marriage, Gaṅgā asks Śāntanu to drown one by one the children born to them. Three children are born to them, Gagivar [Gāṅgeya, Bhīṣma], Setar [Citra, Citrāṅgada] and Vihag [Vicitra, Vicitravīrya], and Śāntanu, against the desires of his heart, kills them all by dashing them against rocks in the Gaṅgā. His heart does not allow him to kill the fourth child, a girl, though, and he saves her by giving her away to his guru. Interestingly, it is a girl he tries to save, not a boy, and at least part reason for this is the hope that the girl would look after him in his old age.

We find Gaṅgā walking to the sea to find out if Śāntanu has followed her wishes even as Śāntanu returns from his secret trip to give away his daughter. In a breathtakingly beautiful scene filled with thrilling folk magic we are shown Gaṅgā going to the sea and bowing down before it. She plants two rows of barley and standing on one foot she prays to God to reveal the truth to her, calling upon him by the power of her truth. As she looks at the barley again, she finds some of them have dried up. Gaṅgā now knows the truth: Śāntanu has broken his word to her. She returns to the palace.

Back at her cloud palace she dresses up with all the sixteen *śṛṅgāras*. She prepares an elaborate dinner for Śāntanu and serves it to him by herself. During the dinner, she asks him: "Rājā, tell me the truth. How many children have you killed?" Śāntanu says four. A shiver passes through Gaṅgā at Śāntanu's lie. She asks him again and again, giving him chances to come out with the truth, her words and voice telling him their relation has come to an end but Śāntanu still persists with his lie. In the end Gaṅgā claps her hands and at each clap a child appears before her – Gāṅgeya, Citra and Vicitra, the three children whom Śāntanu had killed. The girl child, whom Śāntanu had saved, fails to appear. Gaṅgā now calls him a liar and informs him their relation has ended. She disappears giving Śāntanu a gold bangle through which she would be able to recognize him in her next birth and leaving in his hands five strands of her hair that break off as he tries to hold her back by her tresses.

One interesting aspect of the relation between Gaṅgā and Śāntanu is that it is Gaṅgā, the woman, who is dominant throughout. It is she that takes initiative in the sex act between them and not Śāntanu, the man. At each step of the elaborate ritual of their mating, lovingly described by the tribal narrator, Gaṅgā has the upper hand. Śāntanu, almost puppet-like, follows her suggestions, which are really her orders to him. Her pregnancies are results of her deliberate decisions to conceive, and not accidents, nor results of her submitting herself to her man. Śāntanu is in awe of her, dreads her, though he loves her dearly; and her upper hand in their relation remains till the end, though in spite of this she is never unkind to him, even when she leaves him. It is with a promise to be his wife again in her next life that she abandons him finally.

The Gaṅgā we find in the Bheel Bhārath is comfortable with herself, comfortable with her body and her sexuality, with her social and psychological selves. Within the dynamics of their male-female relationship, she weilds the power. She is dominant, though she is never domineering. She is assertive, she is unwilling to demean herself by compromising where she should not compromise. Every single time she speaks, her words have finality, without ever being rude.

Tryambakayajvan, beginning his classic Sanskrit treatise on the duties of women, *Strīdharmapaddhati*, says: "the most important duty of a woman as enjoined by the scriptures is service to her husband."[14] Subsequently concluding the book he says again: since a woman should serve her husband even ignoring her life, since she should accept even her husband's selling her, since she should fulfill his wishes even when they are in conflict with her other prescribed duties, it is clear that the ultimate dharma of a woman is obedient service to her husband.[15] The central thrust in all scriptures dealing with women's duties is that women should find their fulfilment in serving their husbands and that on its own their existence has no meaning to them. To underscore the view that the focus of their life should be the obedient, humble service of their husbands and nothing else matters, women are told again and again that there is no need for them to perform any ritual – since service to their husbands alone will take them to heaven.

Through Gaṅgā, the Bheel Bhārath gives us a different dynamics of power between the male and the female. And this different dynamics of power continues in the case of other leading women as well.

Kuntī, for instance, is another awe-inspiring woman in the Bheel Bhārath. She is born of Śakti, of the blood and flesh of Śakti in the form of a bird that dies on a sage's trident. In a powerful scene that happens at midnight, her awesome power and her true nature are revealed to Bhīma.

Requested by Bhīma to reveal the secret of her power, Draupadī asks him to go and hide on an ancient banyan tree in the open ground outside the city at night and observe whatever happens underneath the tree. He does so and sees Indra arriving there at midnight and cleaning the grounds. Thrones descend from the heavens and arrange themselves on the cleaned ground. Soon a great commotion is heard and all the nine hundred thousand gods come down to the earth and occupy their seats according to their status. God himself comes down from Vaikuṇṭha and occupies a silver throne. It is only after God has taken his seat that Kuntī arrives.

Her arrival is preceded by the sound of deep bellows. Soon Kuntī is seen approaching riding a young buffalo. She alights sprightly from the buffalo and, in contrast to God who occupies a silver throne, occupies a golden throne. Later, in the morning, after the meeting of the gods is over and they have departed, after Kuntī has gone back to the palace, Bhīma rushes to her and falls at her feet in obeisance and addresses her as *jagajjananī*, the mother of the universe.

If Kuntī is thus awesome, still greater is the glory of Draupadī in the Bheel Bhārath. Like Kuntī, she too is a dain, a witch, but unlike Kuntī who is brought into existence by yogic powers from the flesh and blood of Śakti as a bird, she is unborn. The Pāṇḍavas find her in a banana plantation and she is a full-grown woman then. Since all of them found her together, she couldn't be any one brother's wife, so all five of them marry her and install her in her seven-storeyed cloud palace. Except Yudhiṣṭhira, other four brothers are soon trapped in Draupadī's magic [*māyā*]. Yudhiṣṭhira is more cautious; he fears her nature and instead of sleeping with his wife, offers her ritual worship. Hearing the sound of the conch and bells ringing from her room one morning Bhīma peeps in through the window and sees Yudhiṣṭhira lying in prostration at Draupadī's feet. He sees him getting up after the prostrations and offering her an *ārati* accompanied by all the rites of ritual worship to a goddess. Subsequently, questioned by Bhīma, Draupadī asks him to watch her from the banyan tree at night if he wants to learn the truth about her. That is how Bhīma hides on the banyan tree and witnesses his mother's immense power that awes even the gods.

The occasion is the festival of Draupadī. If it is on a bellowing buffalo that Kuntī arrives at the assembly of the gods, it is on a roaring lion that Draupadī comes sometime after Kuntī has arrived. She holds a lit lamp in one hand and has a drawn sword in the other. Seeing her approaching, God gets up from his silver throne and receives her. Her own throne is of pure gold.

There are numerous other occasions that prove the great status of Kuntī and Draupadī. Women lesser than Kuntī and Draupadī too are no less independent and sufficient to themselves. Take the Nāga king Vāsuki's daughter Hīrāpath[16] for instance, who has no supernatural powers. Arjuna goes to her land in search of virgin gold which he requires for use in a sacrifice the Pāṇḍavas are conducting so that their father Pāṇḍu, reborn after his sinful death as a dog, may get absolution from sin. The snakes guarding the palace grounds bite him and he dies. It is then that Hīrāpath sees him and falls in love with him. To revive him, Hīrāpath gets magical substances from her father who initially tries to deceive her by giving her poison in place of ambrosia. Hīrāpath is no lovelorn helpless lass. She knows her father and suspects he might do exactly this. She tries out the contents of the bottle her father has sent her on a donkey and the donkey dies instantly. A furious Hīrāpath now threatens her father Vāsuki with a curse – unless she is given ambrosia instantly, she would curse and reduce Vāsuki's land to ashes. Her father complies instantly. However, competent woman that she is, she knows that Arjuna might leave her the instant he is brought back to life to complete whatever his mission is without giving a thought to her. So she takes the independent decision to marry him – on her own, with the knowledge that her father does not approve of her decision. He asks her maids to fetch everything needed for the wedding and conducts the marriage on her own with the dead Arjuna, and he is brought back to life by her immediately after the wedding with the help of the ambrosia and other magical substances obtained from her father. On finding out that Arjuna is in search of virgin gold, she procures it for him.

Interestingly, one of the substances the sacrifice requires is a man sold by a woman. Bhīma obtains such a man from a prostitute in Kāmarūpa.

The gender switch in the famous story of the Yakṣapraśna also speaks of the changed gender perception of the Bheel Bhārath. While in Vyāsa's Mahābhārata the man testing the Pāṇḍava brothers is a male, a yakṣa, here it is a female, the jal-jogani, a water sorceress. It is no more a man testing another man, but a woman testing a man. And appropriately, it is not a test of cerebral matters men are so preoccupied with that the test is in, but in matters of the heart – in love, acceptance and commitment.

It is in the context of the sacrifice that the Pāṇḍavas conduct to save their father Pāṇḍu who has been reborn as a dog because of his sin that we come across the jal-jogani. One of the *sāmagrīs*, ingredients, required for the sacrifice is virgin water. Nakula volunteers to fetch it. He reaches the tank where virgin water is and gathers it in his pot and then the jal-jogani speaks, demanding that he cannot carry her, the virgin, away just like that, he must marry her. [She is both a water sorceress and the water in the well in which she lives. She is a virgin and since the water is she herself, the water too is virgin.] Nakula excuses himself saying he has no time for it right then, he is too busy with the sacrifice and has to take the water immediately to Hastināpura for the sacrifice. The jal-jogani asks him to look at her and pour the water back into the tank. As their eyes meet, Nakula faints and falls down. He dies there.

It is Bhīma who comes now with a pot in hand, to look for Nakula and to fetch water. Bhīma too gives the excuse of not having time and he too falls down and dies. Sahadeva who comes now sees the dead bodies floating in the water. The jal-jogani appears and tells him the same fate awaits him if he tried to take her, the virgin water, away without marrying her. When Sahadeva gives the excuse of not having time, the jal-jogani asks him to give a promise to marry her afterwards and Sahadeva does so. She brings Bhīma and Nakula back to life and allows Sahadeva to carry the virgin water away with him.

The jal-jogani of the Bheel Bhārath is another empowered woman. She is proactive and assertive. Instead of passively allowing men to have her, she demands her rights. Before a man has her, he must marry her, commit himself to her. It is only to such a man she would give herself. And she is not for anybody's taking – until she gives herself to a man, she is not his. And she is strong enough to turn to stone any man who tries to force himself upon her, to have his way with her against her wishes. The jal-jogani, a minor character in the Bheel epic, behaves as Kuntī, a major character, does in her encounter with Parāśara in the Mahābhārata.

Indra's wife Indrāṇi is another empowered woman in the Bheel Bhārath who is fiercely independent and sufficient unto herself. Unlike Indrāṇi in mainstream mythology, she would not be dominated by her man. To her, devotion to her husband means something entirely different from blind obedience to his wishes. She is a person in herself, authentic, with full autonomy, and does not find the meaning of her existence in her unquestioning service to Indra. If Indra does not treat her with the dignity she deserves, with the honour Indra owes her as an equal human being, she would walk away from him, as a modern woman would do and choose to live on her own, or with whomsoever she chooses. It is important to her that her man is one who commands her respect because of his dignity, courage and honour.

The Anuśāsana Parvan of the Mahābhārata tells us the story of Oghavatī and her husband Sudarśana[17]. Oghavatī was the daughter of King Oghavān and Sudarśana was the son of Agni, the fire god, and Princess Sudarśanā. Having taken a vow that he would conquer death while leading the family way of life, one day Sudarśana tells his wife that she should never do anything against the wishes of their guests. "Give our guests whatever makes them happy; even if you have to give yourself to them to make them happy, do so without a second thought," he tells Oghavatī and she agrees to obey his least wish, including this. One day a guest comes to their home, a Brahmin, while Sudarśana is away. Oghavatī receives him, offers him ritual offerings and asks him what else she can do for him, what else he desires. And the Brahmin tells her he wants her, it is her body that he desires. Oghavatī tries to persuade the Brahmin to ask for something else but he refuses and sticks to his demand. The princess blushes in shame and embarrassment but eventually yields to his demand so that she obeys her husband and her husband does not fall from his vow, from his dharma. The Brahmin takes Oghavatī inside the house, to her bed, and it is then that Sudarśana returns after collecting *samit,* kindling for ritual fire, from the jungle. Not finding Oghavatī waiting for him as she always did, he calls out her name repeatedly. She does not answer for she is ashamed of herself; she has been polluted by the Brahmin – she has become his *ucchiṣṭa,* his 'left-over', that is how Oghavatī puts it to herself.[18]

It is interesting to note the difference in Indrāṇi's behaviour under similar circumstances in the Bheel Bhārath. Indra boasts to a group of sages that his wife is a perfect satī and she would do anything he wishes. He invites them home so that they can have proof for this. The sages come and they start misbehaving with Indrāṇi. One of them winks at her sexually, another presses her foot with his foot, and a third pinches her at her waist. Indrāṇi will not have any of this. She shouts at the sages and threatens them with dire consequences unless they behaved. Indra interferes and tries to pacify Indrāṇi – she is proving herself to be short of being a true satī and he is losing his honour. She does not care. His attempts enrage her. "From where the hell did you get such rotten guests," she asks.[19] "One winks at me, another presses my foot with his foot and a third pinches me at my tender waist, making it bleed. These guys are rogues and I won't put up with their shamelessness. What do they think they are doing? Do they think that a woman's body is something for them to etch their artwork on?" When Indra does not stand up for her and begs her to put up with the behaviour of the saints, she walks away from their home, leaving Indra forever.

We have seen earlier how she goes and offers herself to the Kauravas as a wife but they dread Indra and refuse her and how she then goes to the Pāṇḍavas and offers herself as the wife of one of them, and they too refuse out of fear for Indra. Eventually the twelve-year old Abhimanyu takes her home and makes her his. An infuriated Indra offers a fight through Vāyu, the lord of winds, and Abhimanyu beats him in a fierce encounter. Indra runs away in terror from Abhimanyu. In the last scene of this episode, we find Indrāṇi in the arms of Abhimanyu in a tight embrace of love and the two of them swinging together merrily on a swing.

Let's take yet another woman now – Uttarā, Abhimanyu's wife. If Abhimanyu is an unsurpassed young hero in the Mahābhārata, his heroism is several times multiplied in the Bheel epic. The Mahābhārata war in the Bheel epic is essentially a battle between him on the Pāṇḍava side all alone against the Kauravas, who are seventy-eight in number [and not a hundred], though on the last day of the war he is assisted by Bhīma. [Arjuna is lying dead in *pātāla* where he had gone to fetch rhinoceros skin for making shields for the war, though he would be revived later and reach Hastināpura after the war is over.] The Uttarā of the Mahābhārata, however, is no match for Abhimanyu – in fact, we know hardly anything about her as a person in Vyāsa's epic. She is a mere shadow figure there. In the Bheel Bhārath, though, she is a magnificent woman, splendorous in her womanliness. Like all other women in the Bheel epic, she is proactive and does not wait for life to come to her but goes out and meets it on the way. Her marriage is a splendid event described in great details. After her marriage, she is left behind with her parents, as per the traditional custom, until her *gaunā* can take place when she would go to her husband's place for the first time. In the meantime Abhimanyu, whom the Bheels know as Bāḷo Emmat, Child Courage, accepts the war with the Kauravas all on his own in the distant land of Hastināpura and Uttarā in her heart feels the dread that Abhimanyu does not feel. She has dreams in which she senses the events to come and is restless to go and meet him. Her fear is not that he would die in the war, but that he would die a virgin, which is unacceptable and a great sin. In her dream she sees people have come from Hastināpura to take her to Abhimanyu and jolted out of her sleep, she realizes this is true. She breathlessly urges her parents to hurry and complete the rituals so she could go immediately. She realizes the danger her young husband is in and wants to take with her an *amarkuppī*, containing the magical nectar that brings the dead back to life and gets it from her mother. Fate though is against her on this night and she forgets to take the *amarkuppī* with her as she hurriedly leaves for Hastināpura, jumping onto the back of the camel that travels at the speed of the wind so that she reaches there before dawn when the war would begin. En route she remembers her mistake, sends her escort to fetch the *amarkuppī*, and Kṛṣṇa, who wants Abhimanyu dead because he is in fact a rākṣasa reborn as Subhadrā's son, makes him forget it and instead of the nectar of immortality, it is a bottle of kerosene oil that he fetches. There is no more time to lose, so Uttarā hurries to Hastināpura without the *amarkuppī* and what she sees there is Abhimanyu leaving for the war. She runs after him, calls out to him again and again, begging him to turn around and look at her just once, but the brave Abhimanyu, whose heart longs for her dearly, knows it is not right for him to turn around and look at her then and forces himself to move on ignoring her pleas. His eyes shed tears of blood.

On the Kaurava side all the seventy-eight brothers would die in the war. On the Pāṇḍava side, the only death would be of her husband Abhimanyu with whom she hasn't spent a single moment alone. Fate was against the poor girl. Kṛṣṇa was against this brave young wife of his nephew.

Subhadrā, Kṛṣṇa's sister, comes to us as another woman of substance in the Bheel Bhārath. True her 'womanly curiosity' gets her into trouble when she opens a casket Kṛṣṇa has specifically forbidden her to open and the Asura Īko Dānava, trapped inside the casket by Kṛṣṇa, escapes from it, enters her through her mouth and makes her pregnant. It is Īko Dānava that grows up as Abhimanyu in her womb. But apart from this one incident that is so characteristic of folklore traditions across the world, we find Subhadrā as a highly competent woman throughout. When the Pāṇḍavas allow Abhimanyu to accept the war with the Kauravas all alone, she has the courage to walk straight into the Pāṇḍava assembly and upbraid the Pāṇḍava brothers for their shameless cowardice and meanness in allowing her young child to face the war all alone.

Finally, a quick look at two female characters who appear in the Bheel Bhārath for just one instant: Ambikā and Ambālikā, who have no names here, so brief is their appearance. In the Bheel Bhārath, they are just the widows of Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. After the death of their husbands, one day they approach their mother-in-law and ask her what they should do to obtain children and she advises them to walk naked before Gāṅgeya in the rising sun. They do so and that is how they beget Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. Even these two female figures that appear so briefly show themselves different from their selves in the Mahābhārata. Here they are more independent, and their pregnancies are not forced on them by others but are results of their own initiatives and a fulfillment of their own natural desires. It is interesting that while following their heart, they seek the advise of their mother-in-law and in their moments of their encounter with Gāṅgeya, they do not lose their womanly shame. One of them covers her eyes in embarrassment, resulting in the birth of a blind child, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and the other covers her private parts and her child is born impotent.

A letter from a collection of articles and letters from Manushi published under the title *In Search of Answers,* says: "The ideals, ethics and morality heaped on women since time immemorial are suffocating and killing. The adjectives used to praise us have become oppressive. Calling us loving, they have locked us in the closed room of culture, calling us gentle, they have reflected us in a mirror of helplessness, calling us kind, they have tied us in cowardice, they have handcuffed us with modesty and chained our feet with loyalty, so that far from running, we have not been able even to walk."[20] Well, the women of the tribal land of Bheel Bhārath are certainly not locked in, they are not helpless, they are not cowards, nor are they handcuffed or chained.

In her fascinating work *Women who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype,* Clarissa Pinkola Estes says wildlife and wild woman are both endangered species. "Over time, we have seen the feminine instinctive nature looted, driven back and overbuilt. For long periods it has been mismanaged like the wildlife and the wildlands. For several thousand years, as soon and as often as we turn our backs, it is relegated to the poorest land in the psyche. The spiritual lands of Wild Woman have, throughout history, been plundered or burnt, dens bulldozed, and natural cycles forced into unnatural rhythms to please others.”[21]

What we see in the Bheel Bhārath is perhaps a bit of the spiritual lands of the Wild Woman that have refused to be plundered or burnt, dens that have resisted bulldozing, and natural cycles that have survived against attempts to force them into unnatural rhythms to please others.

Speaking of the Wild Woman archetype, Estes says: “Healthy wolves and healthy women share certain psychic characteristics: keen sensing, playful spirit, and a heightened capacity for devotion. Wolves and women are relational by nature, inquiring, possessed of great endurance and strength. They are deeply intuitive, intensely concerned with their young, their mate and their pack. They are experienced in adapting to constantly changing circumstances; they are fiercely stalwart and very brave.”

Clarissa Pinkola Estes’s words sound like they were written to describe the women of the Bheel Bhārath.

NOTES

The Mahābhārata always refers to Vyāsa Mahābhārata. When the Bheel version is referred to, it is mentioned as Bheel Bhārath. All translations from the Sanskrit are by the author.

ENDNOTES

1. Mahābhārata Anu, 38
2. *Yadi puṃsāṃ gatirbrahman kathañcinnopapadyate;/*
   apyanyonam pravartante na hi tiṣṭhanti bhartṛṣu//
   – Ibid., 38.22
3. *Antakaḥ pavano mṛtyuḥ pātālaṃ vaḍavāmukham/*
   kṣuradhārā viṣaṃ sarpo vahnirityekataḥ striyaḥ//
   – Ibid., 38. 29

4. Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa Āranya 69
5. *The Satrajjha na Ganga episode, Bheelon ka Bharath,* Dr Bhagvandas Patel, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2000
6. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*
7. Bheel Mahābhārata: Ganga Weds a Frog Prince [http://www.boloji.com/Hinduism/116.htm]
8. Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha Kāṇḍa 115.17,24
9. MB., Adi Parvan
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. *Matsya Purāṇa*
13. Anais Nin, *A Woman Speaks,* p 116
14. *Mukhyo dharmaḥ smṛtiṣu vihito bhartṛśuśrūṣaṇaṃ hi/*
15. *patiśuśrūṣaṇaṃ tu prāṇānām aviganananayā/*
    kartavyatvāt, bhartṛkṛtātmavikrayasyāṅgīkartavyatvāt, itaradharmopamardena ca kartavyatvāt, patiśuśrūṣaṇaṃ mukhyo dharmaḥ/
16. *Bheelon na Bharath, Pandavono Senetaro Jhagan, Kunvara Sona*
17. MB., Anu 2
18. *ucchiṣṭas'mīti manvānā lajjitā bhartureva ca/*
    tūṣṇīṃbhūtā'bhavat sādhvī na covācātha kiñcana//
    —Ibid., 2.61
19. *Bheelon na Bharath,* page 298
20. Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, *In Search of Asnwers: India Women's Voices from Manushi,* London, 1984
21. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D., *Women Who Run With the Wolves,* New York 1992

SECTION III

Performance

13

Ideals in Music as seen through the Mahābhārata

LEELA OMCHERRY

Mahābhārata, the treasure-house of philosophy and wisdom is a valuable source of information about the people of ancient India, their culture, society and polity. Among the cultural expressions of a people, music and dance feature significantly; although Vyāsa's references in the Mahābhārata are scattered and often casual, they shed considerable light on the distinctive features of ancient Indian music and dance. To a student of the history of ancient Indian music these provide essential traces for getting a sense of the performative milieu of the age. The present article is an attempt to bring together the ideals in music set up by Vyāsa[1].

Music at its best is called *Deva Gāndharva* (3.44.10) and its exponents consist of *nartaka* (7.82.3), *gāyana* (1.218.4) or *gāyaka* (7.82.3), and *vādaka* (1.187.24). To denote an expert among them Vyāsa uses the terms *kuśala* (7-82-5), *viśārada* (2.10.12), *kovida* (8-34-60), etc. To Vyāsa, many factors go into the making of a *kuśala* or *viśārada*. The *ācārya* (teacher) and *śikṣā* (training), *śiṣya* (student) and *yoga* (practice), *kalā* (art) and *kalāthya* (artist), *rasika* (admirer) and *vimarśaka* (critic) are the foremost among them. For each of these Vyāsa has significant suggestions.

Teacher and Training

Judging from the frequent allusions to song, music and dance, it is clear that *Vaihārika Śilpa* or Fine Arts formed an important subject of study in ancient times. The Mahābhārata speaks about various types of teachers such as *kulapati, ācārya, śrotriya, tāpasa, śikṣaka* etc. The term *śikṣaka* perhaps denoted the master who gave training in Fine Arts. Most of the teachers were patronized by *deva-s* (3.44.6, 7) and kings (4.13.42). During grand festivals and *yajña-s,* the teachers with their party visited different regions of Heavens (7.57.4; 7.61.60) and Earth (8.4.20 - 40; 2.5.2 to 10) as state guests (2.4.36) and gave performances (2.4.39). The teachers did not have any fixed income. The patronages (3.44.6) and presentations (1-142-9) were sufficient to run their huge establishments. *Āśrama-s* (1.76.24) as well as palaces (4.11.11, 12) and heavenly abodes (3.44.6, 9) could be centres of instruction. The instruction was well planned and strictly disciplined (3.90.14). The students received training in Vedic studies as well as in Fine Arts.

Elsewhere in the epic, it is suggested that tradition would lose its dignity and worth if practised by *yonisaṃkarajāti-s* (3.85.30) or lower orders; it is clear that *vidyā-s* including the *gāndharva* could be taught only by masters of the orthodox sect who followed the *jātidharma* and *kulācāra.* A teacher was even expected to teach *gāndharva* and *sāma gāna* side by side (3.91.14). The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra says that "a teacher should be one in whose family learning is hereditary, who himself possesses it, and who is devoted to *dharma.*" This idea is supported by Vyāsa while describing sage Nārada on many occasions.

In the field of music, the teacher was to be a *dakṣa* (4.11.8), one who has complete mastery over the time-forms of music (3.91.14) like Arjuna (4.11.12,4.37.21), Citrasena (3.168.58), Viśvāvasu (3.91.14), Nārada (9.54.19) and others. Like the masters of other branches of learning who were *kramaśikṣā viśārada-s* (1.70.41) he also is well versed in the traditional ways of training (3.91.14) and produced *gītavāditra-kuśala-s* through *suśikṣā* (12.53.3).

Vyāsa qualifies both vocal and instrumental music as sweet and melodious (3.43.7, 11). If the term *śabda-saṃskāra* (1.64.42) can indicate voice culture, the most essential thing for making a musical voice *madhura* (3.192.7), *svara-sampanna* (5.94.4), *snigdha, anupama* (5.121.27), it can be concluded that, like the *vaidikācārya-s,* the music teacher too was *śabda saṃskāra-śuci,* one who knew various methods of voice training.

Vyāsa is of the opinion that cultural training given to undeserving candidates would be futile (13.17.17). So the teacher was to be a wise person who could select those who had nobility of birth (4.10.12), (3.46.27 to 47), sincerity (3.44.8 to 10) and also tastes, talents, character and melodious expression (3.44.11). He was to impart the principles of *gāndharva* exhaustively (3.168.58) and teach the students *gīta-vāditra* in their variety and diversity (4.2.14). He was an expert in composing songs and orchestral music suitable to any occasion (3.90.18). He was to teach his students the music of the Earth and also the music of Heaven (3.44.11). He was also an expert in teaching even *sāma gāna* (3.91.14).

In training the student, both vocal and instrumental, the teacher followed only traditional principles (3.91.14). But adherence to tradition and principles did not mean un-aesthetic approach to artistic pursuits. An ideal master's style and training method pleased the students and the patrons alike (4.13.42). His art was appreciated by the people of Heaven (2.10.24, 24, 25, 26) and Earth (2.4.36 to 39) and it was a "must" both in the durbar-halls (*sabhā-gṛha*) as well as in the *yajña* ceremonies (2.4.30 to 40; 2.5.2 to 10).

The teacher imparted not only music and its allied branches like dance and instrumental playing, but also all those *catuṣṣaṣṭhi kalā-s* (2-61-9), and the existing *śāstras.* He was in short, a *sarvavidyā viśārada* (14.72.17). The use of the term *sarvavidyā viśārada* suggests mastery over a number of *vidyā-s* and *śāstra-s*. The following verses give an idea of the conception:

> "Other places were again graced with Brāhmaṇas acquainted with ordinances of sacrifice, of the *aṅgas* and of the hymns of the Yajur Veda. Other places were again filled with the harmonious strain of *sāma* hymns sung by vow-observing sages. At other places again Brāhmaṇas learned in the Atharva Veda and those capable of chanting the sacrificial hymns of the *Sāma* were reciting the Saṃhitās according to the just rules of the voice. And at other places again, other Brāhmaṇas well acquainted with the science of orthoepy were reciting *mantras* of other kinds. In fact, the sacred retreat resounding with these holy notes was like a second region of the Brahman. There were Brāhmaṇas skilled in the art of building sacrificial platforms and the rules of *karma* in sacrifices, and who were conversant with logic and the mental sciences, possessing a complete knowledge of the Vedas.
>
> There were also those who were fully acquainted with the meaning of all kinds of expression; those that were conversant with all special rites; those that were followers of *mokṣa dharma*, those who were skilled in establishing proportions, rejecting superfluous causes and drawing right conclusions. There were those having a knowledge of the science of words and of prosody, and of the Nirukta. Again there were those who were conversant with astrology and learned in the properties of matter and the fruits of sacrificial rites, possessing a knowledge of causes and effects, capable of understanding the cries of birds and monkeys, well read in large treatises and skilled in various sciences." (1.70.38 to 46).

Besides being capable and accomplished as a teacher and artist, the ideal master was essentially a noble person (12.220.4, 5) whose lofty ideals could mould the character and outlook of his students, especially at a stage when their minds were flexible and highly impressionable. Learning from him led the students to *śreyas* (3.44.7). Whether it was an aristocratic *rāja-kanyā* (4.11.12) or a modest *kula-kanyā* (4.2.29), he treated the students equally and impartially, and taught them without any reservation (4.2.12, 29). He loved them like an affectionate father (4.72.3) and valued them more than he valued his own children (1.134.6). All these qualities and qualifications earned for him a universal regard and high social status and he was respected even by kings (2.5.13 to 16).

Students

The discipline of a music student under a master is not specifically described in the Mahābhārata. But there are suggestions, and rules and regulations laid down for the students in general, much of which could be applied to the students of music as well.

Not only males like Arjuna (3.91.4, 15) but also females like Uttarā (4.1.2) and Devayānī (1.6.6) could be ideal student of music. Like the students of other branches of learning, the students of art too underwent *gurukula* training as is evident in the case of Arjuna. It was also possible that the teacher stayed in the residence of the disciple to give training (4.1.11). While undergoing training, it is said that the students in general practised celibacy (12.91.8) and became *trisnāna-śīla* to improve their vitality, handsomeness, and vocal expression (5.7.3). As the above qualities are a "must" to a music student, he too would have observed these habits more carefully than anyone else. Naturally he too might have followed the rest of the observations like keeping the mind pure (12.91.8), holding the teacher in high esteem and rendering implicit obedience to his words (12.91.8), attending *gurukārya* (12.91.8) contenting himself with whatever knowledge the teacher was pleased to impart (12.91.8), and finally observing the daily routine like early rising, morning and evening prayers and practices. Otherwise how could there be a number of classical musicians who were *sādhuśikṣita-s* (7.2.5)? After completing training under the guidance of one *guru*, the students used to go to other masters to learn different styles (3.44.6; 3.91.14, 15).

The student was efficient in learning *nṛtya, gāna* and *vādya* in their variety and diversity (3.44.11). Even the different styles belonging to the earthly and the heavenly regions were learnt by him (3.44.7). He was always attentive to his lessons and understood them like a *yatātmā* (13.17.16). He fought against all temptations and distractions (3.46.25 to 30) and practised the art with *atulaprīti* (3.44.10). Like other students, he too considered *vidyā* to be paramount in his life (5.34.39) and approached it with the spirit of a devotee (13.17.17). Quite often he used to be absorbed in it (3.44.10). But this did not mean that he failed to remember about himself and to react to his own personal problems (3.44.10).

Vālmīki in the Rāmāyaṇa suggests that morning and evening are the best times for practicing music. Support to this idea is supplied by Vyāsa, when he says that *vidyā* should be practised during morning and evening (3.200.83; 4.18.19). This principle is followed by music students and performing artists even today. The practice is referred to as *āyoga* (5.34.39), and it is consisted of many hard observances. Besides the aforesaid ones, the student had to (a) train his voice to be melodious or make his instrumental playing pleasing; (b) learn his songs or *guts* by heart and maintain their original form and spirit; (c) do *svādhyāya* or daily recapitulation of the already learnt lessons, (d) study the theory of *rasa* in order to digest well the contents of the songs, (e) understand the intricacies of *tāla* and *laya,* (f) acquire proficiency in singing along with *veṇu vīṇā* and *mṛdaṅga,* (g) master the technicalities of the *gāndharva,* (h) become acquainted with the sixty four arts, and (i) observe everything that would make him a *dakṣa* in the field of music.

Apart from being a studious and hard-working student, he had a few additional qualifications. He was an ā*stika,* to whom alone *vidyā* could be imparted (13.17.17). He hailed from a noble family (3.44.6). He was handsome and had inborn talents (3.44.10). He had enough moral strength to fight against temptations like sex, drinks, etc. (3.46.25 to 30).

Artist

He could be a vocalist (7.82.5) or an instrumentalist (12.53.33) who was traditionally trained in the art of *gāndharva* (7.82.5). He had complete mastery over the various aspects of music like *sthāna* (2.4.38), *pramāṇa* (2.4.38), *sapta-svara* (12.184.39), *gīta* (2.10.12), *tāna* (2.10.9); *tāla* (2.4.38), and *laya* (2.4.38). Since *gāndharva* combined in itself dance, vocal and instrumental music (9.37.11), the ideal artist also had mastery over all these and was an expert in the same (3.91.14). He was well-versed in *deśa gāna* and *devasaṅgīta* which enabled him to please people of different regions and tastes (2.4.36 to 39: 2.7.24; 2.10.12, 13, 26; 2.8.38; 2.10.9). He was such an adept that he presented the art in various ways (4.2.29) each of which was so novel, clear and vivacious that all of them could create the impression in every listener that he was performing in front of him (12.29.76). He was also capable of developing his own style of singing (3.90.18) or playing (7.61.7) which were not only sweet and appealing but also refined and elevating (3.142.6). Yet for creating his own style, he did not dilute the tradition or deviate from it (2.4.39). It was in every way traditional (7.82.5).

As a vocalist, the artist was *raktakaṇṭha* (12.53.3) and *svarasampanna* (4.18.19) whose voice could be *snigdha* and *anupama* even while singing at the top scales (5.12.27). It was *madhura* like the voice of a *haṃsa* (3.1.45) and covered all the octaves with perfect ease (5.121.27). Befitting to the dignified contents of the songs and style, it had a divine charm of its own (3.14.26). He was *kuśala* in singing and sang sweetly, softly, and effectively (3.43.28). His music blended in perfect harmony with *tāla* (3.158.97) and the accompanying music from *śaṅkha, āḍambara* (7.72.11), *vīṇā, dundubhi,* (7.72.12) etc. He had a vast repertoire of songs (4.2.29) and he was familiar with the *padakrama* of the verses and meaning of the songs (1.7.40). While singing he became one with the spirit of the songs and presented it according to rules laid down by classical tradition (2.4.39). He took every pain to sing them with clarity and *arthaguṇa* (3.44.11) which captivated the minds of the listeners and left an everlasting impression on their minds (1.76.24).

As an instrumentalist, his playing technique was noted for its *vaividhya* (8.34.92) and *vaicitrya* (4.2.29). It was also marked for its traditional purity and artistic ability (7.82.5). Since vocal music and instrumental music always went together as complementary to each other, an ideal artist got himself proficient in both of them like Nārada, Tumburu, Viśvāvasu, Hāhāhūhū and others who used to sing while playing on the *vīṇā* (9-54-19; 761-7). He was, of course, one of the

gīta vāditra kuśalaḥ sāmya tāla viśārada//
pramāṇe tha laya-sthāne kinnaraḥ kṛtaniśramaḥ. (2.4.38)

He presented the art before cultural audiences (3.43.28) on proper occasions (12.29.75, 76) and at ideal timings (4.18.19). He kept his art fresh and effective by regular practice (3.34.39) and was considered to be a *dakṣa* in music (12.230.24). The aim of music as in all other fine arts is the expression of sentiments and feeling. Song, tune, tempo, the way of grouping the accompaniments and the instrumental music, count much in making a musical piece emotionally expressive. This requires a thorough knowledge of not only the music technique but also of aesthetics. The ideal artist, therefore, was a *bhāvajña* (12.325.25) and was well-versed in *śabdaśāstra, yuktiśāstra* and *arthaśāstra* besides *gāndharvaśāstra* (13.104.187). Also he was a *catuḥṣaṣṭhīkalā viśārada* (2.61.9), *sarvaśāstra-viśārada* (2.5.8) and *sarvakovida* (12.325.35).

Such an artist is portrayed by Vyāsa while describing Nārada in the following lines:

> "There came, O Bharata, unto that assembly the celestial Ṛṣī Nārada conversant with the Vedas and Upaniṣads, worshipped by the

celestials, acquainted with histories and Purāṇas, well-versed in all that occurred in ancient *kalpas* (cycles), conversant with Nyāya (logic) and the truth of moral science, possessing a complete knowledge of the six *aṅgas* (viz., pronunciation, grammar, prosody, explanation of basic terms, description of religious rites, and astronomy). He was a perfect master in reconciling contradictory texts, in applying general principles to particular cases, as also in interpreting contraries by reference to differences in situation; eloquent, resolute, intelligent, possessed of powerful memory. He was acquainted with the science of morals and politics, learned, proficient in distinguishing inferior things from superior ones, skilled in drawing inferences from evidence, competent to judge the correctness or incorrectness of syllogistic statements consisting of the five propositions. He was capable of answering successively Bṛhaspati himself while arguing, with definite conclusions properly framed about religion, wealth, pleasure and salvation, of great soul and beholding this whole universe, above, below, and around, as if it were present before his eyes. He was master of both the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems of philosophy, ever desirous of humbling the Celestials and Asuras by fomenting quarrels among them, conversant with the sciences of war and treaty, proficient in drawing conclusions of judging by things not within direct ken, as also in the six sciences of treaty, war, military campaigns, maintenance of posts against the enemy and stratagems by ambuscades and reserves. He was a thorough master of every branch of learning, fond of war and music, incapable of being repulsed by any science or any course of action, and possessed of these and numberless other accomplishments." (2.5.2–9)

Not only artistic abilities but also character and outlook count much in building an artist of high repute. Moreover an artist is said to be a saintly person (12.230.21) who was a *sarvatrapūjita* (12.230.4). An ideal artist, therefore, was an *adhyātma vidhi-tattvajña* (12.23r.8) and *vedaśrutākhyānajña* (12.230.12). He acquired *lokapriyatā* (12.230.4) and *sarvasevyatā* (12.230.7) by keeping himself *śrutacaritra* and *acapala* (12.230.5). He was *abhaya* and *dhīra* (12.230.16), *kṣānta* and *śakta* (12.230.8). He was neat and had pleasing manners (12.230.1). He was honest (12.230.8) and never changed words and principles to win his ambitions (12.230.7). Though he was blessed with *tejas, yaśas, buddhi,* and *jñāna* (12.230.10), he was not at all proud or haughty (13.8.5), but always remained a *vidyāvinīta* (13.8.5). Moreover he was a *suśīla* (12.230.9) and *nyāyajña* (12.230.20) who talked mildly (13.8.5) and smilingly (12.335.35). His words were *madhura* (13.1r7.131) and *manānukula* (12.230.13). He was neither attached or detached towards anybody in particular (12.230.13). Yet he was so kind and sympathetic that he could not bear to see anyone in distress (12.230.11).

Like those *manīṣis* who were not at all sad about things that were beyond their reach (12.229.10), he, too was not at all unhappy if he did not receive any material benefits (12.230.23). Neither was he happy if fortune favoured him (12.230.23).Like those *manīṣis* he also did not hurt or harm anybody (12.230.11, 18, 24). He trusted all (12.230.17) and betrayed none (12.230.22). He was such an *apāpa* that he always did only good to others (12.230.19). He hated *ātmapraśaṃsā* (12.230.18) and avoided criticizing others (12.230.11). Though he was a *vāgmī* (12.230.24) he did not like to argue with other people (12.230.14). But if circumstances had made such a situation inevitable, he handled it in the light of a *mṛdusaṃvāda* (12.230.18). He won the good will and admiration of his patrons and admirers not through false promises and pretensions (12.230.7) but through honesty (12.230.8), sweet and sensible words (3.297.51), and pleasing manners (12.230.10). He ill treated none (12.230.12) but did good to all (12.230.22). His mental maturity enabled him to treat *nindā* and *stuti* on equal terms (5.36.15). He kept his art in high esteem (3.213.9) and safeguarded it through hard practice (5.34.39) and *suddhavṛtti* (5.36.30). He never brought down the prestige of his art for wining popularity and material gains (12.229.23).

The frequent references to the artists as *paramarūpadarśanīya* (3.192.9), *maṅgalarūpī* (13.8.6), *nānāramaṇarūpa*

(13.107.131), *cārurūpa* (3.231.45), etc. give the impression that Vyāsa considered physical charm to be an additional qualification for an artist. This, the poet feels, may be further enhanced by wearing costly and colourful *viśeṣavastra-s* (11.2.9), *suvarṇābharaṇa-s* (2.61.8), *divyamālā-s* (1.123.53), *maṇikuṇḍala-s* (4.18.19), *nīṣkā* (3.233.47), *parihataka* (4.19.26), *mekhalā* (13.107.30), *kāñcī*(13.107.67), *nūpura* (13.107.30), *keyūra* (2.61.9), etc. and also by applying *sugandhalepana* over the body (13.107.129), *añjana* on the eyes (8.44.18), manaḥśilā on the face (8.44.18) and flowers on the hair (2.61.9).

The Music

The music at its best was called *divya* (3.47.3) and *atula* (3.44.10) and it had the status of a Veda (3.91.15). It was practised even by gods (7.80.41, 42). This music which was once lost in the deluge along with other cultures, was rediscovered and disciplined by Sage Nārada (12.210.19 to 21). Though it was popular all over the world, one could be associated with it only through *sukṛta* (5.26.27) and *śreyas* (5.26.7), it was practised not only by professionals called *raṅgastrī-puruṣa-s* (3.15.14) consisting of *naṭas, nartaka-s, bhalla-s, sūta-s, vaitālika-s* (2.4.7), *śailūṣa-s* (2.10.26) *māgadhavandins* (14.64.2), *cāraṇa-s* (1.210.4) and celestials called *devāpsara gāndharva-s* (1.122.59, 60), and *kinnara-s* (13.102.23) but also by *dvija-s* (3.90.5, 6), *dvijakanyā-s* (1.76.24), *rājaputra-s* (3.44.7), *rājakanyā-s* (4.11.12) and other maidens (4.2.29) of the society. This *devagāndharva* (13.9.47) denoted the blissful combination of *nṛtya, gīta* and *vāditra* and consisted of artists knowing all of them but specializing in any of them like Nārada (9.54.19), Viśvāvasu (12.29.76) and others.

The songs belonging to this field were all *divya* (3.43.7), *cittabuddhihara* (5.109.9), *cittamohana* (3.158.97) and *maṅgalakara* (3.192.7) and were set to a variety of appropriate *divyatāla-s* (13.14.401). They blended well with the accompanying music (7.72.12). They were all traditional (12.28.2) befitting all occasions except funeral rites (13.90.6). *Kavipuṅgavas* might have composed them (3.231.49) according to the *samāsavidhi-s* (12.348.53). Like the Vedas they were loaded with *puṣkalapadākṣara-s* (12.38.2), the rendering of which could destroy *mahāpātaka-s* (12.17.116) and led to salvation (3.114.12). The *divyatāna-s* (2.10.9), that often followed the songs, and the *divya vādyā-s* (8.34.45) that always assisted the vocal music also were sweet (7.72.37) and contributed much in this direction.

Concert

An ideal concert is suggested by Vyāsa through the following lines: "Mingled with the beat of drums and conches, the sweet *vīṇā* is nowhere played upon, according to *sāmya tāla.* The auspicious and delightful songs are not sung". (7.72.12)

Rasika-s and Vimarśaka-s

According to Vyāsa, traditional art should be presented only before *vidvatsadas* or an enlightened audience. To appreciate an art which is highly scientific, noble and elevating, the listeners should be genuine lovers of the art and should be familiar with the subject. To pass a correct judgment on an artistic display, the critics should be masters in the field with an unbiased mind and encouraging spirit.

The sage speaks about those ideal *sāmājika-s* through the following verses:

> "They, O Devala, who behave uniformly towards those that praise them and those that blame them, they who conceal their own vows and good acts, they who never indulge in recriminations, they who never say even what is good when it is calculated to injure (instead of producing any benefit), they who do not desire to return injury for injury received, are said to be men possessed of wisdom. They never grieve for what is yet to come. They are concerned with only what is before them and act as they should. They never indulge in

> sorrow for what is past or even call it to their minds. Possessed of power and regulated minds, they do at their pleasure, according to the way in which it should be done, what waits for them to do in respect of all objects, O Devala, if solicited regardfully thereto.
>
> ...Of mature knowledge, of great wisdom, with wrath under complete control, and with their passions kept under sway, they never do an injury to anyone in thought, word, or deed. Destitute of envy, they never injure others, and possessed of self-control, they are never pained at the sight of other people's prosperity. Such men never indulge in exaggerated speeches, or set themselves in praising others, or in speaking ill of them. They are, again, never affected by praise and blame uttered by others in respect of them. They are tranquil in respect of all their desires, and are engaged in the good of all creatures. They never give way to wrath, or indulge in transports of joy, or injure any creature. Untying all the knots of their hearts, they pass on very happily. They have no friends nor are they the friends of others. They have no foes nor are they the foes of other creatures- (12.229.12 -17)

The shrewd poet does not stop with that. He has a few words to say about the *alpajñāni-s* or the pseudo-lovers and ignorant critics who cause great havoc to the art. He says:

> "Wicked men of immature understanding can never know things truly, even as persons unconversant with scriptures are unable in all their acts to be guided by reason. With eyes directed to the faults of the scriptures, they decry scriptures. Even if they understand the true meaning of the scriptures, they are still in the habit of proclaiming that scriptural injunctions are unsound. Such men, by decrying the knowledge of others, proclaim the superiority of their own knowledge. They have words for their weapons and words for their arrows and speak as if they are real masters of their sciences. Know, O Bharata, they are traders in learning and Rākṣasas among men. By the aid of mere pretexts they cast off that morality which has been established by good and wise men." (12.142.12-16).

NOTES

The translations of the verses are based on the English version of the Mahābhārata by the well-known writer Shri P.C. Roy.

1. *The Mahābhārata* edited by Gita Press in four volumes has been used here for reference.

14

Life outside the Text: On the Background and Interpretation of the Mahābhārata Characters in Contemporary Kataikūttu Performances

HANNE M DE BRUIN

Identifying (with) the demonic

The portrayal of the Mahābhārata in the Kataikūttu tradition in South India is replete with instances of identifying (with) the demonic. In the performance of *Karṇa mokṣam*, one of the most popular plays in the Kataikūttu tradition, the tragic hero Karṇa is portrayed as an extremely generous king, who gives alms open handed to the poor and the needy. His compassion obliges him to marry his wife, Ponnuruvi, because Duryodhana, having desired her first, later rejects her.[1] In the play Karṇa appears well aware of the fact that fate has placed him on the wrong side of the warring factions, the side where *dharma* does not reside. However, loyalty towards his friend Duryodhana mixed with resentment towards his mother, who abandoned him as a baby, and his half-brothers, particularly Arjuna, who humiliated him, prevents him from crossing over to the side of the Pāṇḍavas even though he foresees his own death on the battlefield at the hands of Arjuna.

Seasoned Kataikūttu actor Rajagopal portrays Karṇa as the 'underdog' of the Mahābhārata, emphasizing his perceived low caste, which is at the root of his discrimination by the Pāṇḍavas and his strained relationship with his wife. Probably his portrayal opens up possibilities for people in the audience to identify their own situation with that of the tragic hero Karṇa who, in spite of his downtrodden position, is able to attain *mokṣa,* albeit not in his present, but in a future life.

In addition to Karṇa's dominant good qualities of munificence, loyalty and compassion, and his popularity as a 'heroic loser' representing the underprivileged, Rajagopal refers also to the darker, demonic aspects of Karṇa's character in his performance, though these aspects never become entirely visualized or 'embodied'. According to the performer these aspects manifest themselves in particular during the game of dice and Duḥśāsana's subsequent attempt to disrobe Draupadī before the assembly of kings. Karṇa does nothing to prevent the villainous actions of his friend Duryodhana. On the contrary, he supports him verbally and even edges him on. Kataikūttu performers explained the demonic side of Karṇa's character by alluding to his previous life, when he was the demon Tanāsura.

Tanāsura has a thousand heads and his ears are decorated with thousand pairs of earrings. His body is protected by armour [alternatively, a thousand armours]. The demon possesses a boon from Lord Śiva to the effect that before any one can cut off one of his heads he must perform one year of asceticism and engage in one year of battle with him. Thinking that he is invincible, the aśura starts to terrorize the gods. In order to kill him Mahāviṣṇu splits himself into Nara and Nārāyaṇa. While Nara – a human incarnation – fights with Tanāsura, Nārāyaṇa is absorbed in penance. So doing they are able to cut off 999 heads. When Nara is about to sever the last head from Tanāsura's torso, the demon flees and seeks asylum with the Sun God. Sūrya thereupon transforms Tanāsura into a fruit of the *nelli* tree, which he swallows. When Sūrya and Kuntī have intercourse, the fruit passes into the embryo. Karṇa is born still wearing one pair of earrings and the coat of armour, which make him, too, invincible. In order to complete their unfinished work, Nara reincarnates as Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa as Kṛṣṇa (de Bruin 1999, 295-6).

In first instance, this background information, which is part of the oral reservoir that feeds Kataikūttu performances, appears to be a 'folk explanation'. However, it is corroborated by the Sanskrit Mahābhārata which states that Karṇa is the incarnation of the demon Naraka, son of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) and Bhūmi (Earth). The God Indra became afraid of Naraka who aspired for his position, which he tried to obtain through learning and through practicing austerities for ten thousand years. The *Aśura* was slain by Kṛṣṇa. In the *Ghoṣyayātrāparvan* (a part of the *Āraṇyakaparvan*) of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata it is stated explicitly that thereafter:

> '. . . the soul of the slain Naraka clung to Karṇa. Recollecting his previous enmity, O hero, he will fight Keśava and Arjuna...' [Sukthankar 1942, 3, 240: Śloka 19; van Buitenen, 1975, 692].

The hero Karṇa, as an incarnation of Tanāsura (in the Tamil tradition) or Naraka (in the Sanskrit tradition), harbours as part of his 'self' traces of his previous demonic existence. The valiant demonic, which comes to the fore during the violent confrontations between epic heroes in particular, is a vital ingredient of the portrayal of Kataikūttu's principal characters, the *kattai veshams*. The wooden *kattai* ornaments worn by these characters symbolize the heroic (*vīra*), even ferocious (*raudra*) nature of its wearers. *Kattai veshams* represent the superhuman – divine or demonic – warriors, who are the main agents in the epic battles around which much of the Kataikūttu Mahābhārata repertoire is built. The image which we get of these epic heroes – an image that appears rooted into older hero cults of the Saṅgam literature and subsequent heroic genres, such as the medieval *parani* poetry (celebrating a hero who has slain seven hundred or, alternatively, a thousand elephants in warfare) – is that of a consecrated, berserk warrior rather than that of the "classical" Kṣatriya, whose ultimate ideal picture is painted in the Bhagavadgītā. The former is emotionally fully involved in and part of the sacral battle context in which he or she operates. In contrast, the emotional detachment of the warrior-hero of the Bhagavadgītā, who tries to annihilate the effects of his violent deeds, makes him a reluctant victim of the chaotic, strife-ridden mundane world (de Bruin 1999, 92-93).

Possession

If allowed to come into the open, a character's demonic disposition may result ultimately in real or played-out possession in the actor concerned. The state of possession appears a necessary prerequisite to remove mental and ethical barriers in order to be able to enter into acts of killing family and loved ones, because it blinds a person for the disastrous effects of his violent (often *adhārmika*) actions. In all-night Kataikūttu performances, the occurrence of possession as clearly defined, climatic moments is considered an indicator of the success (or sacral efficacy) of the performance.

Within the Kataikūttu repertoire there are few characters who in the course of their epic lives refrain from not behaving in an agonistic manner unacceptable to the moral code. With the prospect of war closing in, it would be possible to say that the demonic present in these characters rises to the surface or 'possesses' them to invoke, actualize and embody violent strife. Kataikūttu actors display the demonic through a character's make-up, use of voice, facial expression and stage behaviour—all of which, with the exception of the make-up put on prior to the actual performance, are receptive to expectations and reactions of the audience. Depending on the narrative context and the social validation of the character concerned Kataikūttu actors allow a character's demonic disposition to surface. Demonic possession-prone characters are, for instance, Duḥśāsana, Duryodhana, Śakunī and Kicaka. Alternatively, performers may opt for constraining the demonic to the extent of denying its existence in epic characters whose representation is influenced by socio-political demands that follow the Brahminized (Bhagavadgītā-like) paradigm. Characters in whom latent demonic traits appear to exist that are not allowed to fully develop are Bhīma, Arjuna, Karṇa, Aravan and Draupadī. Even though Draupadī appears particularly demonic and possession-prone in her 'local' portrayal as the warrior-goddess Vīrapāñcālī, this aspect is hardly ever allowed to take the upperhand or is consciously toned. Being or becoming deified during the telling of the epic, Draupadī tends to be depicted according to the feminine ideal of a subservient, modest and 'contained' Pārvatī rather than an assertive, heroic, murderous Durga who displays qualities that are not in line with the 'feminine ideal' (de Bruin 1999, 129-138). As a consequence, representing the demonic in performance, as an indicator of a demonic disposition, appears to have become a means to distinguish between predominantly 'good' (or politically 'correct') and predominantly 'bad' male and female characters. In spite of this split in the representation of characters, there is a tendency in the Kataikūttu tradition to portray Duryodhana, who could have easily been associated with the bad, dark side of the fraternal conflict as the principal hero of the epic. His demonic behaviour and possession are allowed to develop only in reaction to the Pāṇḍava's arrogance and humiliation of him and his ninety-nine brothers – a humiliation that finds its roots already in the period of their collective training in the weapons and the arts. One would like to think that, if circumstances would have been different, he would perhaps have remained a honourable man.

The phenomenon of possession occurs in particular during what I have referred to as sacral (performance) contexts where Kataikūttu is considered to be a form of sacrifice and a means to come into contact with 'special' (sacred) power (de Bruin 1999, 124-29 and 135-38). Because of their emphasis on the physical (bodily) involvement of the participants in chaotic and violent contexts of which the outcome remains uncertain, these contexts stand furthest removed from the transcendent Brahmin ideal, which tries to access and control the divine through, among other things, the removal or substitution of violence and a flawless implementation of rituals (Heesterman 1985, *et passim*). Perhaps because of their different approaches to accessing sacred power, possession as a phenomenon is often associated with 'folk traditions', such as Kataikūttu, and the 'folk' religious practices with which it is closely related and which follow a non-Brahmin paradigm to invocate and channel sacred power.

When researching Karṇa's demonic character from within the Kataikūttu tradition, where possession in actors is an accepted theatre *praxis*, I was struck by the explicitness with which possession and its overpowering, blinding effects are acknowledged in the 'classical' Sanskrit version of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa. Listen to the following passage taken from the Āraṇyaka parvan (in the translation of van Buitenen 1975, 692-693). It describes how the Dānavas convince Duryodhana that he is truly divine and invincible, because they themselves have created him that way. Therefore, he should not refrain from a war that will bring him (and them) victory and power. This strange scene is set against an excursion of Duryodhana and his royal entourage into the forest during the period of the Pāṇḍavas' exile. When the royal party transgresses into the territory of Citrasēna, he and his fellow-Gāndharvas capture Duryodhana and his household and keep them suspended in the air. The exiled Pāṇḍavas come to their rescue. Once rescued Duryodhana feels so humiliated that he wants to commit suicide by starving himself to death. The Dānavas, who see their chance to defeat the Gods blown to the winds with Duryodhana's decision to withdraw from the conflict, have Brahmins expert in the Vedas and their branches and using spells and prayers carry out a rite resulting in the appearance from the fire of Kṛtyā, a wondrous woman with a gaping mouth. Kṛtyā 'kidnaps' Duryodhana from the site where he sits starving himself to death, an event which apparently takes place without his conscious knowledge (van Buitenen 1975, 691). In a twinkle of the eye she carries him off into the domain of the Dānavas where he undergoes a kind of 'brainwashing' when they tell him:

> '... (Duryodhana) Enough therefore of your despair! You are in no danger, for the Dānavas have become heroes on earth in order to assist you. Other Aśuras will take possession of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and the others; and possessed by them they will fight your enemies ruthlessly. When they engage in battle, best of the Kurus, they will give no quarter to sons or brothers, parents or relatives, students or kinsmen, the young or the old. Pitiless, possessed by the Dānavas, their inner souls overwhelmed, they will battle their relations and cast all love far off. Gleefully, their minds darkened, the tiger-like men, befuddled with ignorance by a fate set by the Ordainer, will say to one another: "You shall not escape from me with your life!" Standing firm on their manly might in the unleashing of manifold weapons, best of the Kurus they will boastfully perpetrate a holocaust.' (van Buitenen 1975, 692)

This passage identifies the Dānavas as the possessing agents of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, and the others, including Karṇa, on the Kaurava side. Several researchers have speculated about the identity of the agents causing possession in certain epic characters in the Kataikūttu tradition and the degree of identification of the actor with the possessing entity. Both Frasca and Hiltebeitel identify the possessing agents with one of the well-known deities or deified characters of the Mahābhārata (Frasca 1990, 154, 165; Hiltebeitel 1988, 267-281). I have attributed the phenomenon to the 'special' or 'sacred power' that arises during the dramatic actualization of antagonistic battles between opponents of whom at least one possesses demonic traits (de Bruin 1999, 135-138; de Bruin 2006, 124). Rather than talking about epic characters, deities, or Dānavas as being or representing the possessing agents, I feel that Kataikūttu performers, and perhaps the Mahābhārata textual tradition, too, invoke the ambivalent 'feeling' or 'power' of the demonic. Given the right circumstances, this energy has the potential to annihilate its bearer. When the demonic traits of a character are allowed to take the upperhand, this temporary outburst of antagonistic 'special' energy almost always forebodes his future violent death in battle. Simultaneously, the removal of this negative (blocking) force through providing an appropriate venue and vessel (i.e. the actor) within which the demonic can be released with some degree of safety appears to clear the way for a purified, novel beginning.

If not taken literally to represent actual epic characters, the Dānavas perhaps represent universal feelings of ambivalence embedded into our selves that, given circumstances, may possess all of us in much the same way as they 'kidnap' Duryodhana's mind, whereafter he is resolved to wage a violent war blind to its disastrous, annihilating effects. For me, the unsolved riddle then remains which role the wondrous woman with a gaping mouth, Kṛtyā, played in his 'possession'.

Conclusion

Recent writings on masking, the complexity of framing and possession, suggest that, from the point of view of the performers, certain kinds of possession could be interpreted as opening up hidden, deeper layers of otherness within oneself – or, perhaps hidden selves while performing the other – that remain out of reach under normal circumstances (Handelman 2006, 261). Somehow the state of possession seems to resolve or remove barriers, which prevent us from accessing powerful, ambivalent energy levels that are excluded from our daily mental disposition, very much like the transparent and to-the-point answers that may emerge from patients suffering from dementia and loss of decorum, which until then have prevented them from looking into these hidden parts of the mind/consciousness. The Mahābhārata as a sequel to other narratives where two blood-related parties of equal strength oppose each other (e.g. The churning of the ocean story), seems to suggest that the seed of the demonic other is always present in ourselves or, given circumstances, may enter the porous, poor self-defence of our 'selves'. Within these narratives it appears to be precisely the triggering and revelation of the demonic into some and the suppression of this trait in others, which distinguishes two hitherto undistinguishable, because equal-in-everything entities into Suras and Asuras, gods and demons, Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas.

Finally, it seems wise not to be too eager to assign the label of 'folk invention' to character portrayals and other phenomena found in the Kataikūttu tradition, such as the emphasis on the demonic, Karṇa's earlier demonic existence, and the presence of characters in Kataikūttu plays that are omitted from Vyāsa's Mahābhārata (such as, for instance, Karṇa's wife Ponnuruvi). The work of Alf Hiltebeitel on the Draupadī cult in Tamil Nadu, and my own work on the Kataikūttu tradition have thrown up a number of examples where religious and theatrical practices that appeared to have no base in the classical tradition, turned out to represent archaic information around which local traditions have been built (Hiltebeitel 1988, de Bruin 1999). These findings pose the question as to what went into the making of the critical edition(s) of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata. Based on textual information available in manuscript form, I assume that local, oral performance traditions and conventions, some of which opted to highlight and interpret characters differently and many of which may have been rooted into ritual traditions, were omitted from the edited text. Surprisingly, local (performance) traditions in existence today contain information, that is encountered, too, though often in a less-elaborate way, in the classical Sanskrit text (rather than in the 'classical Mahābhārata texts' available in Tamil). In the Kataikūttu, Mahābhārata tradition and the closely allied Draupadī cult, these elements may have been highlighted and augmented, probably in response to local demands and needs of patrons and audiences. It is impossible to establish with certainty whether a phenomenon, such as the focus on the demonic aspect of the Mahābhārata characters, in Kataikūttu performances and the establishment of a relationship between the demonic and the phenomenon of possession, existed in local traditions that somehow went into the making of the classical, edited texts or whether these local traditions took particular bits of information available in the classical texts, such as the possession of Karṇa, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa and others by the Dānavas, and elaborated upon it. Framed otherwise, the question remains as to what the observed continuities between the classical textual tradition and the actual practice of a 'folk' tradition, such as Kataikūttu tell us about the historical processes of selection, interpretation and dating of the textual tradition of the epic and its multiple forms of local expressions.

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NOTES

1. In the Kataikūttu tradition Karṇa has a wife, Ponnuruvi. She is said to be the daughter of the King of Kalinga and she is one of the principal characters in the play *Karṇa mokṣam* (see also the English translation of this play by de Bruin 1998). None of the classical versions of the Mahābhārata mention the name of nor report about the personality of Karṇa's wife (though the Sanskrit version states that Karṇa's sons die on the battlefield implying that he must have been married). The Javanese Wajang Wong tradition features a play on the theme of Karna's death, entitled *Karṇa Tandhing.* In this play Karṇa is married to the daughter of

King Śalya, Devi Surtikanti, who, similar to the Kataikūttu version of the story, plays an important, though again different role in Karṇa's life (de Bruin and Brakel-Papenhuyzen 1992: p. 50-66).

15

The Mahābhārata on Screen

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

The last decade of the twentieth century has been significant for many different reasons. In the twin fields of literature and entertainment it has seen a remarkable phenomenon: the resurgence of myth. There has been an unprecedented efflorescence of the human imagination re-creating our mythology in the written and the spoken word, on stage, cinema and television. The most pervasive invasion by myth took place through television, where the Indian masses—the elite and the petty bourgeois, the intelligentsia and the hoi polloi alike—found the epic characters peopling their homes, with interpretations as widely varied as those of Shyam Benegal, Ramanand Sagar, Sanjay Khan and B.R. Chopra. This is particularly significant because here we find the most powerful of all mass media devoting prime time to telecasting, week after week, the largest of all epics, the Mahābhārata. There is, perhaps, no greater validation of the universality of appeal of Vyāsa's epic than the fact that the script for the serial that engrossed millions of viewers was written by Rahi Masoom Reza, an Indian Muslim. Every Sunday from nine to ten in the morning, for 93 weeks, normal activity in the vast majority of Indian homes was put aside, as the public clustered in front of television sets.

Then, in a manner which even the all-knowing Vyāsa had not imagined, the Mahābhārata bridged Kipling's unbridgeable East-West gulf, when Peter Brook unleashed his gargantuan eight-hour dramatisation of the epic on the international scene, first on stage and then on screen. In a different and unexpected manner, the Indian ethos invaded the homes of its colonisers and inter-linked the popular imaginations of an island and a subcontinent separated by thousands of miles, when the BBC telecast the B.R.Chopra tele-serial of Vyāsa's masterpiece in English.

In the Chopra serial, the technique used by Reza to lift his subject above and beyond the constricting limits of parochial sentiments is a stroke of genius. His Mahābhārata is narrated not by Vyāsa the seer, but by Time itself. It is Kāla or Time which speaks to us right from the inception, interpreting, providing links and, above all, setting the events in its perspective which spans the millennia to make the ancient epic relevant today. In the very opening speech Time clarifies that the epic is not just the story of a battle between cousins for a kingdom (as has been made out time and again by western scholars and their Indian followers) but "a story of the rise and fall of Indian Culture and Civilization." This claim regarding the rise of Indian civilization might strike one as excessively ambitious, but Reza means by it the values regarding a ruler which his Bhārata enunciates. Following V.S. Sukthanker's 'On the Meaning of the Mahābhārata', Reza goes on to amplify his perspective of the Mahābhārata as an account of "a battle between Truth and 'all that is untrue'. It is a story of Knowledge confronting Ignorance." Reza's objective in bringing out the universal relevance of the ancient epic is voiced through Time: "Every era has to go through this conflict in its own Kurukṣetra, its own battlefields. Because the truth of every era has to battle with the present of that era" in a conflict perpetual as Time itself. A generation to whom Hiroshima and Nagasaki are living memories, who have lived through the horrors of pogroms, Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge, the Middle-East conflagrations, Swapo-Intifida, Sri Lanka; and we who are caught in the traumas of Punjab, Kashmir, Assam, Bihar— to all the bitter fact of destructive internecine conflict is only too true. Because, in T.S. Eliot's words:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past ...
The past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations.
Time the destroyer is time the preserver.
. . . the future can only be built
Upon the past.

It is essential that this epic be assimilated continuously so that each 'present' can prepare itself for its 'future' by fighting out its own Kurukṣetra. And that takes place through different means: by being taught by teachers, revealed by seers, narrated by mothers, or interpreted on television.

The point of departure chosen by Reza provides an insight into his point of view. The Mahābhārata, Sauti says, has more than one beginning. Some begin with the story of Āstika, while others prefer to start with the story of Uparicara Vasu, King of Chedi, allegedly father of Matsyagandhā-Kālī-Satyavatī, progenitor of the dynasty through her son Vyāsa. Reza takes off with the eponymous Bhārata, son of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. The choice is momentous as, through the incident he creates, Reza sets forth his conception of the values he finds in the epic which must become part of the consciousness of today's "present", equipping it to fight out the battle for creating its own "future". Reza builds up Satyavatī as the real motive-force behind all that befalls the dynasty. Not having learnt her lesson with the birth of a blind and a sickly grandson, she now hungers after quickly securing the birth of great-grandsons! This can be partially understood if we recall that what we are now seeing is truly the dynasty of Satyavatī, the fisher-girl, and by no means that of Śāntanu. It is the blood of Parāśara and the Niṣadas which is forcibly mingled with that of the princesses of Kāśī to give Hastināpura its two princes. It is to this same Kāśī that Hastināpura turns again after four generations, when Janamejaya seeks the hand of its princess, only to face an embarrassing enquiry about who he is!

Reza builds in an element of foreboding through small incidents which lay the foundations of future events. Kṛpācārya comments that Duryodhana "is generous but is obstinate and is unwilling to give even a needle's point if he does not wish to," thus pre-empting Duryodhana's future statement. Karṇa as a child gives a pot-full to a mendicant who asked for only a handful, predicting his future Dātā-Karṇa status. Kuntī tells Mādrī, "I detest dice. I do not know why I see bad omens for the future in every dice of the game." Vyāsa asks Draupadī to take care of her hair for it has significance for the future. Draupadī ties a piece of cloth, torn from her sari, on the bleeding finger of Kṛṣṇa who tells her that he would one day return the debt of cloth: the Vastraharaṇa parva is sounded. There are many others.

Notwithstanding Reza's restrictions, some of his omissions are unpardonable. For example, he misses the Khāṇḍava dahana episode completely though in this episode lie the seeds of very important incidents of the Mahābhārata. Reza also omits the boons given by the Yakṣa to Yudhiṣṭhira because of which the disguise of the Pāṇḍavas during their sojourn with Virāṭa could not be penetrated. Reza should have mentioned Parāśara's boons to Satyavatī by which Matsyagandhā became Yojanagandhā with the boon of eternal virginity. Had she remained Matsyagandhā, probably Śāntanu would have been repelled. Draupadī, too, was Padmagandhā and eternally virgin. Kunti too had the boon of virginity. Satyavatī and Draupadī, were both dark, so one was named Kālī and the other Kṛṣṇa. Reza misses the very important discussion between Kuntī and Pāṇḍu on the question of begetting sons by both Kuntī and Mādrī with the help of the Brahmin's boon to Kuntī. It throws up many issues of social norms and the morality of the time. The incident of the gifting of Brahmaśira missile to Arjuna by Droṇa is ignored by Reza. Here indeed lies the seed of one of the most significant episodes of the Mahābhārata—the Arjuna-Aśvatthāmā confrontation that resulted in the death and resurrection of Parikśit, the ultimate heir to the throne, and the terrible curse of Kṛṣṇa on Aśvatthāmā. The remarkable speech of Draupadī, to Kṛṣṇa before his peace-embassy and his thrilling response which is so significant is missed by Reza completely.

A major defect in Reza's visualisations is his characterisation. Reza is content to cast Kuntī in the image of the traditional wife, meek, obedient to her husband's slightest wish. Reza completely fails to portray the steel and fire of Kuntī, the immeasurable patience with which she guides and trains the Pāṇḍavas in their childhood and youth, through their series of endless privations, and nurtures them very carefully to convert them into men of character. Reza has also missed her tremendous political acumen and sound diplomatic perceptions. We do not find the depth that Vyāsa has granted Yudhiṣṭhira. Reza's Yudhiṣṭhira is a good boy, slightly weak in the head while Vyāsa's is steady both in life and in the battlefield, which is why he is named Yudhiṣṭhira. Reza can never forget that Kṛṣṇa is God. Therefore, Reza's Kṛṣṇa keeps performing miracle after miracle with ease despite disclaiming any ability to work miracles in the Udyogaparvan. If Chopra had followed Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's brilliant study of Kṛṣṇa he would have made a major contribution to modern India in giving us a demystified hero with whom we could identify and seek to emulate instead of a deity to be kept far off on a pedestal. Perhaps Reza and Chopra had committed themselves to following the Bhāgavata catering to the Bimaruh cowbelt. Mahābhārata's characters are complex, multi-dimensional and beautifully conceived. The reader wonders at the subtleties, the practicality and the human-ness of the conceptualisation. Reza's characters, on the other hand, are all uni-dimensional (Duryodhana is particularly painted in the blackest of hues). The iridescent colours of Vyāsa's characters are missing.

At the end, Episode 93 uses Time to bring home the realisation that Kurukṣetra is the scene of the ruins of all norms of noble conduct, and that such is the consequence of all great wars, a fact that rings only too true in the ears of a generation which has grown up in the shadows of two world wars and labours under the constant threat of a nuclear holocaust. A modern poet has conveyed the ethos of Kurukṣetra in unforgettable words:

"I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them they bleed; I wander in a land of dry stones: if I touch them they bleed.

How can I ever return, to the soft quiet seasons?
In life there is not time to grieve long.
But this, this is out of life, this is out of time. . .
It is . . . the world that is wholly foul.

Clear the air! Clean the sky! Wash the wind! Take the stone from the stone, take the skin from the arm, take the muscle from the bone, and wash them. Wash the stone, wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul, wash them, wash them!" –T.S. Eliot, "Murder in the Cathedral"

In the speech, Reza gives Yudhiṣṭhira following his coronation, he reiterates the ideals with which he began the Bhārata. Yudhiṣṭhira gives his subjects the right to remove him if they find him more concerned with his own happiness than theirs. In this Reza is faithful to Vyāsa's projection of the ideal of a government based upon disinterested service in the cause of the common good, upon righteousness and pure motives. He also announces the wiping out of the bitterness of the past for building a future free from ills. However, the last words of the speech come as something of a shock, being a complete lift from President Kennedy's much quoted lines, when citizens are urged to seek not what the country has done for them but what they can do for the country; for the country is not for the people or the king, but vice-versa. Reza thus ends as he had begun, with patriotism as the cardinal virtue, that being his way of interpreting the Mahābhārata for India.

Bhīṣma's dying speech is Reza's great contribution to a modern understanding of character and destiny in the greatest of all epics. Reza has Bhīṣma admit that he was wrong in not heeding Vidura's advice to look not at the throne of Hastinapura but at its people's interests. It is the nation which must take precedence over loyalty to father or son or even to one's oath. It is a tremendous change for Bhīṣma to be able to say, "My pledge kept taking me away from the interests of my country. . . . In fact . . . I was becoming a traitor." He regards the bed of arrows as his expiation for such treachery in silently watching his country slide down to destruction, for the sake of the image of his father which he saw reflected in Dhṛtaraṣṭra. "Whenever a Devavrat obstructs the interests of the country," he warns Yudhiṣṭhira, "there will come an Arjun to put him on a bed of arrows." In an exceptionally fine and courageous insight, Reza has Bhīṣma say, "These white clothes of mine are somewhere tainted by my arrogance and ego."

There are two other pieces of advice Reza has Bhīṣma impart, both of which are aimed at the modern audience. The first is that if one has inherited a weak economic and social structure, efforts must be made to alter and improve it. The second is that the character of a society is gauged by the status of its women, by the respect women are accorded. That is a message sorely needed in a society replete with bride-burning, female illiteracy and infanticide, and gang-rape of Dalit women.

Reza also criticises the partition of India, and its subsequent division into linguistic states which has given rise to all the fissiparous movements continuing since then by implication when he has Bhīṣma adjure Yudhiṣṭhira never to let the kingdom be divided, for can a mother be divided among her children? Bhīṣma's bed of arrows, he states, is party to the partition of Hastināpura. Even war is to be preferred to such a partition of the country, he asserts. He dies with the prayer that nature in Bhāratavarṣa should remain unsullied and her politics unblemished, both reflecting Reza's pre-eminent concerns for modern India.

Reza concludes by using Time to ram home his message, urging the audience to pick out the Dhṛtaraṣṭras in society, identify injustice cloaked in the garb of virtue, not be misled by elders who align themselves with evil and remain silent in the face of outrage, not to become a Karṇa and place one's innate nobility at the service of unscrupulous self-seekers who, feeding on greed, anger, hatred, malice, dissension, folly, shamelessness and bitter speech (the passions which rend the body apart for death to take hold. Droṇa, 24.38-39), destroy themselves and the nation, so that Kurukṣetra is not repeated and an ideal Dharmakṣetra comes into being. The message Reza seeks to convey echoes, most uncannily, T.S. Eliot's "East Coker", voicing our own bewilderment faced with the enigmatic stance of the Kuru elders, those epitomes of dharma:

"Had they deceived us
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders.
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?
The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,
The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets
Useless in the darkness into which they peered
Or from which they turned their eyes. . . .
. . . Do not let me hear

Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God."

The past is of inestimable value, and it is a fallacious notion of evolution, an extremely superficial concept of progress, which disowns the past instead of assimilating it for rebuilding our present and forming the future. For, as T. S. Eliot wrote in "Little Gidding", "A people without history/Is not redeemed from time." A nation, a people, divested from its own cultural myths falls into the pit of degeneration. That is the immediate relevance of Reza's re-telling of the Mahābhārata today in the disintegrating polity we live in, where,

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
. . . and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."
—W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

As the script ends on this note, one is reminded of the description given at the beginning of the Mahābhārata, for Reza has most successfully proved the verity of those words through these memorable ninety three episodes:

"Like a stick of collyrium,
the wisdom of this poem opens the eyes
of a world swathed in darkness.
As the sun scatters darkness so the Mahābhārata ignorance,
by discoursing on *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*.

As the full moon opens the waterlily with soft light. So this Purāṇa expands the mind of man with the light of śruti.
The womb of nature is a house of darkness.

This darkness is scattered by the lamp of history."
Ādiparvan, Anukramaṇikā, 84-87.

Joseph Campbell, the great mythographer, drove home this point in his 1961 talk in New York (Myths to Live By, Bantam, 1984, p. 9) where he said: "Such literally read symbolic forms have always been, and still are, in fact, the supports of their civilisations, the supports of their moral orders, their cohesion, vitality, and creative powers." Where this integral possession of myths is sacrificed at the altar of modern progress, "there follows uncertainty, and with uncertainty, disequilibrium, since . . . where these have been dispelled there is nothing secure to hold on to, no moral law, nothing firm." The results of such a break from the past is that "there is everywhere in the civilized world a rapidly rising incidence of vice and crime, mental disorders, suicides and dope addictions, shattered homes, impudent children, violence, murder and despair." It is indispensable for us, therefore, "to be loyal first to the supporting myths of our civilization. . . . That is a prime question . . . of this hour in the bringing up of our children." The question is, how will the past be made relevant in the present for creating a meaningful future? Campbell's answer, given in his 1971 talk (ibid. p. 275), needs to be carefully studied and transmuted into action:

> "It is—and will forever be, as long as our human race exists—the old, everlasting, perennial mythology, in its subjective sense, poetically renewed in terms neither of a remembered past nor of a projected future but of now: addressed, that is to say, not to the flattery of peoples, but to the waking of individuals in the knowledge of themselves, not simply as egos fighting for place on the surface of this beautiful planet, but equally as centres of Mind at Large—each in his own way at one with all, and with no horizons."

However, the problem with a view such as that presented by Reza is that it is a rather simplistic and partial approach to the Mahābhārata. For, the epic does not end as the script would have it, with a triumphant, Shelleyan, "The world's great age begins anew". The very immediacy of its appeal for modern existentialist man inheres in what Reza leaves out. The Mahābhārata does not end with the happy establishment of a dharma rājya. Indeed, the Pāṇḍavas had thought everything had been achieved, but this is what their greatest hero, Arjuna, has to say faced with Dhṛtaraṣṭra's daughter Duḥṣalā frantically pleading with him to spare her infant grandson, her son Suratha having died of shock on hearing of his arrival: "Shame on that Kśatriya-dharma for which I have despatched my kinsmen to Yama" (*Āśvamedhika*, 78.43). What we find him experiencing is:

The rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.

Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
—T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

Yudhiṣṭhira, the undisputed Emperor, would rather turn hermit, having tasted the "bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit" ("Little Gidding"):

"They are all dead-all those who had dreamt of conquering each other—
all deprived of life-breaths despite their wisdom. [*Droṇa*, 52.15]

"We have squabbled like a pack of dogs over a piece of meat, and we have won—and the meat has lost its savour. The meat is thrown aside, the dogs have forgotten it." [*Śānti*, 5. 10, the P. Lal condensation]

"This whole world appears empty and hollow,
it no longer pleases me.
They are all gone now—friends and kin;
my army is wasted away."
[*Āśramavāsika*, 36. 31. My translation]

Are we not reminded powerfully of Karṇa's vivid dream of Yudhiṣṭhira seated on hill of skulls and bones, greedily licking sweet curd from a golden bowl? The difference is that, as Milton wrote,

"They, fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with dust, instead of fruit
Chewed bitter ashes."

Is it not, veritably, a field of ashes instead of a garden of righteous happiness that Yudhiṣṭhira obtains as the bitter fruit of his desires?

What is the final picture we get of the five brothers who have waded through a river of gore to establish their righteous supremacy? At the end of what they consider to be an epoch-making Aśvamedha Yajña, a blue-eyed half-golden mongoose scornfully announces that its worth does not equal even a single grain of rice offered by a virtuous Brahmin to his guest with devotion. The victorious Pāṇḍavas even lose their mother who laid the foundations of their achievement on which her nephew Kṛṣṇa sought to create a magnificent edifice. Kuntī refuses to stay on and enjoy a kingdom won by her sons. She tells them that she had urged them to fight for their rights so that their relatives did not exploit them and deprive them of their rights and so that their Kśatriya valour was not besmirched by the gross insults suffered by Draupadī. Most ironically, she prefers to accompany the cause of the fratricidal holocaust, Dhṛtaraṣṭra, into the forest, and dies there, calmly seated, engulfed in a forest fire.

As for the empire itself, after the humiliating experience with the robbers, Arjuna establishes Kṛtavarma's son Aśvapati in Khāṇḍavaprastha in Martikavata city with the remnants of the Bhoja women; and Sātyaki's son Yauyudhani on the banks of the river Sarasvati with the decrepit and the infants. Indraprastha—which one thought was coterminous with Khāṇḍavaprastha—is given to Aniruddha's son Vajra with all the aged and the children of Dvārakā. Babhruvāhana returns to Manipur despite being Arjuna's only living son. Yuyutsu is made protector of Hastināpura with Parīkṣit as its king, looked after by Subhadrā. Obviously, the Yādava connection was the most important alliance for the Pāṇḍavas. Thus, the "empire" is already split into several principalities during the lifetime of the Pāṇḍavas. The ultimate comment is the King of Kāśi's query, "Who is this Janamejaya?" when he is approached for his daughter's hand for the king of Hastināpura!

Kṛṣṇa, whom Reza has projected as the hero of his story, participates in the annihilation of his own clan which he had built up into a mighty power with Herculean effort. What is the end of this *puruśottama*, this *avatāra*? He is slain not in heroic combat with a mighty opponent, but shot down by a lowly hunter while resting under a tree! This hunter, Jarā, is actually his cousin, Ekalavya being another; the fratricidal war is limited not to the Pāṇḍavas and Dhṛtaraṣṭras but encompasses the Yādavas too. His dearest *sakhā*, the warrior par excellence Arjuna, fails to escort the women of Dvārakā to safety in Indraprastha, unable to prevent staff-wielding robbers from abducting them,

Reza has failed to achieve two objectives he had declared in earlier stages of the script. One is Rādhā's statement that Kṛṣṇa is leaving Vṛndāvana in order to fulfil his mission to re-establish the dignity of man. This is certainly lost sight of. The second is that the assertion of the independence of women made by Reza's Rukmiṇī fails to be carried forward into his Draupadī, and even into the redoubtable figure of

Kuntī whom he turns into a mild, helpless victim of circumstances very different from the moulder of events that she is in Vyāsa.

Vyāsa does not rest his cast here. He follows the Pāṇḍavas right up to the bitter end, beyond death itself. The sole human being to reach heaven in his mortal body is Yudhiṣṭhira, only to be shocked beyond words to see Duryodhana enthroned there in celestial splendour! Demanding to be led to his dear brothers and his wife, Yudhiṣṭhira finds himself in hell; to be taught the lesson, all over again even at this ultimate stage, that life is a mingled yarn of good and ill together. The very relevance of the Mahābhārata lies precisely in this vicarious experience for,

> "We appreciate this better
> In the agony of others, nearly experienced.
> Involving ourselves, than in our own.
> For our own past is covered by the currents of action,
> But the torment of others remains an experience
> Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.
> People change, and smile: but the agony abides.
> Time the destroyer is time the preserver."
> —T.S. Eliot: 'The Dry Salvages'

The reason why this epic speaks to the hearts and minds of all of us in India even today thousands of years later, and the necessity for constantly re-assimilating it, is not only because it reflects a great civilization "with the types, ideas, aims and passions of a heroic and pregnant period in the history of a high-hearted and deep-thoughted nation", but particularly since "it has . . . a formative ethical and religious spirit which is absolutely corrective to the faults that have most marred in the past and mar to the present day" our national character, and also a corrective to "the dangers of that attractive but unwholesome Asura civilisation which has invaded us, especially its morbid Animalism and its neurotic tendency to abandon itself to its own desires."—Sri Aurobindo: On the Mahābhārata, (Pondicherry, 1991, p. 72).

When the four-hour film of Peter Brook's Mahābhārata was screened in Calcutta, I was asked to produce a critique. I refused. What interests me is the epic that has inspired Indians over millennia; and that is not what I experienced through those four hours. However, Dr. John D. Smith's glowing review of Brook's eight-hour stage-adaptation in the Times Literary Supplement made it impossible for me to remain silent any longer. Let me begin with an excerpt from Smith: "It is magnificent – but is it the Mahābhārata? The answer is a resounding Yes! This is not Peter Brook's Mahābhārata, this is the Indian epic Mahābhārata, lovingly cast by Brook into a form which non-Indian audiences can share." Actually, to an Indian who is immersed in this greatest of all epics, the answer is a resounding "No!"

Brook's film is not a portrayal of a titanic clash between the forces of good and evil, which is the subject of the epic. Nor is it even the depiction of the fratricidal struggle for Empire that sucks into its vortex armies from outside India's borders, spanning far more than the land between the two rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā. It is not even a picture of a battle of princes. The crores of Indians do not hold dear to their hearts the story of the warring progeny of some rustic landlord, which is that we see in Brook's version. Where is the grandeur of Indraprastha, that marvellous assembly hall created out of a wilderness, which was the spark igniting Duryodhana's smouldering envy into a terrifying conflagration? And with it disappears the *raison d'etre* of Duryodhana's deliberate denigration of Draupadī, in public to take revenge for her publicly scorning his floundering about in the Indraprastha assembly hall. Gone is the gripping tragedy of Karṇa's existential predicament: the agony of unknown parentage; the nobility of sacrificing loyalty to one's brothers and even one's own life at the altar of friendship;

the riveting story of a self-made hero, devoid of any suprahuman help, voluntarily divesting himself of the special protection he was born with, to face the enemy purely on the basis of what he is as a self-made man. And that enemy is a son born of Karṇa's mother—a truth that Karṇa knows, but not his brother. Therein lies the angst at the heart of this story, completely missed out by Brook.

Or, take the simplistic manner adopted by Brook to resolve one of the most traumatic situations in the epic: why is it that Bhīṣma, the eldest Kuru and the embodiment of rectitude, watches unprotestingly while a queen and daughter-in-law of the dynasty is molested in public? Bhīṣma's only reply to the blazing queries hurled at him by the anguished Draupadī, is, "The ways of Dharma are too subtle." It is the investigation of the different types of Dharma that forms one of the major threads knitting the epic together: Bhīṣma's ancient dharma against the wider, new dharma of Kṛṣṇa's *lokasaṃgraha* and *yogakṣema*; Dhṛtaraṣṭra's dharma towards his sons against the ancient tradition of Bhārata who adopted the Brahmin Bhāradvāja as his successor instead of giving the kingdom to incompetent sons; the dharma of Yudhiṣṭhira that permits him to stake brothers and wife at dice and not protest when she is repeatedly molested by Duḥśāsana, Kīcaka and Jayadratha; the dharma of Kuntī who has sons by four persons and insists on her daughter-in-law going one better, yet takes to the forest with Dhṛtaraṣṭra and Gāndharī when her sons have won the kingdom; the dharma of the wives of the Pāṇḍavas, who do not accompany their husbands into exile while Draupadī, alone does so; the dharma of Arjuna who would rather accept the challenge of the Trigartas and be drawn away from the battlefield than protect Yudhiṣṭhira whom Droṇa has sworn to capture – Arjuna, that most puzzling of characters, who insists on exiling himself from Draupadī and has no hesitation in taking three wives in that interregnum; the dharma of five brothers, not one of whom turns back to pause beside their common wife when she falls down, dying. Instead, Peter Brook offers us a ridiculous scene of Yudhiṣṭhira climbing up a swaying rope ladder, presumably to Heaven!

Brook even manages to leave out the most poignant part of the questions put by the Dharma-Crane to Yudhiṣṭhira over the corpses of his brothers: "What is the most amazing thing in the world?" The answer is possibly one of the finest insights into the contradictions that make up the stuff of human existence – that at every moment we are surrounded by evidence of death and yet we behave as if we will live forever!

Brook's panache for juxtaposing the grand and the ridiculous is unsurpassed. Amid the roaring of chariot-wheels on the field of Kurukṣetra he suddenly produces the gaunt figure of Bhīṣma atop a charpoy carried on the shoulders of bearers, poking a lance here and there. That charpoy, covered with arrows, has to be taken to depict the śara-śayyā which has stirred the hearts of millions of Indians over millennia! Brook has this failing of mixing up the cinematic and the theatrical modes, leading to a confused audience-response. His tinkering with the text for this purpose is nothing new. His version of King Lear takes similar liberties with the text to show Lear and his entourage riding on and on through icy wastelands.

It is Brook's Kṛṣṇa which is the most disappointing representation. His idea of conveying Kṛṣṇa's presence is to show him suddenly in a very awkward imitation of the *tribhaṅga* posture, something that is wholly foreign to the epic and typical only of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Instead of the discus, there is sometimes the flute, which is foreign to the epic milieu. Moreover, how does one reconcile to a balding, sunken-cheeked Kṛṣṇa who suddenly tells Bhīṣma that whatever is about to happen in the Kuru court during the dice game must happen and he must not interrupt it at any cost? Bhīṣma meekly nods and therefore keeps silent at Draupadī's anguished cry for justice and protection of her honour. This is a wholly gratuitous and uncalled-for tampering with the text.

Smith has high praise for Brook's handling of the Book of Virāṭa, as "an interlude or pantomime". Pantomime it assuredly is not. What is there of pantomime in the abject roles that five princes and their queen have to perform as gambler, cook, transvestite, cowherd, groom and maidservant? The attempted rape of Draupadī is no part of pantomime. What this Book certainly does constitute is a foreshadowing of the Great War that is to follow. Uttarā, like Arjuna later, grows faint at the sight of the Kuru army. Arjuna, like Kṛṣṇa later, forces him to fight and, as in the Great War, all the Kuru champions are laid low and the Pāṇḍavas take regal seats in the court with their queen. It is Uttarā's sister who bears in her womb Parīkṣit, the future king. To see this Book as a pantomime is to miss the point completely.

Smith's comment that the central narrative conveys a "clearly readable" message that the epic "is a highly fatalistic account of destruction visited on men by gods", reveals a typical occidental mental make-up at work, incapable of comprehending the Indian situation. Whatever else it might be, the Mahābhārata certainly does not depict the Pāṇḍavas as "pressed by the will of the gods into ever-worsening moral and physical conflicts, culminating in a cataclysmic war of annihilation." That, indeed, is what the Occidental epics are about. The very reason why the Mahābhārata still remains so gripping for Indians is precisely because it repeatedly brings home to us the truth:

> "In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be; passions spin the plot,
> We are betrayed by what is false within."
>
> Meredith, "Modern Love".

Smith's idea, "But whatever he does, he will not avert the destruction the gods have called for", belongs wholly to the realm of Greek tragedy and is not part of the Vyāsan epic ethos where it is the individual who shapes his destiny. It is Bhīṣma who, with deliberate intent, sacrifices kingdom and progeny for his father's pleasure, and thus carves out a unique niche in myth and legend. It is Yudhiṣṭhira who decides, twice over, to accept the challenge to play dice despite the pleas of his brethren and accepts the consequences. It is Kuntī who—having known from Yudhiṣṭhira and the twins that Arjuna has won Draupadī—greets the returning trio of Bhīma, Arjuna and Pāñcālī with the order to share her equally. Again, it is Draupadī who accepts this; it is not forced upon her. In all this, Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do, contrary to what Smith puts across: "the gods have sent one of their number Kṛṣṇa, to oversee events". It is the arrogance of the Pāṇḍavas in the tournament that turns Karṇa into an enemy (even Yudhiṣṭhira the meek and righteous never protests against the mocking of Karṇa). It is Yudhiṣṭhira's peculiar dharma that leads to the release of Jayadratha after he has molested Draupadī, which becomes the cause of Abhimanyu' death. Kṛṣṇa does not and cannot prevent any of these events, each of which is critical in shaping the plot. What Kṛṣṇa does do is to set up Yudhiṣṭhira as the Emperor through the killing of the tyrant Jarāsandha and his follower Śiśupala and performance of the *rājasūya* sacrifice. This is something that Brook overlooks, although this is what excites the jealousy of Duryodhana and precipitates the dice-game.

One is further disappointed in the film by the depiction of Ghaṭotkaca and his mother Hiḍimbā as some horrendous African cannibals, and Śiva as a Japanese kung-fu master, worsting Arjuna in martial arts. One of the most irritating scenes is one where Duryodhana uses black magic to find out where Arjuna is practising austerities. There is absolutely no justification for importing such mumbo-jumbo, possibly done to capitalise on the orientalist picture of India as the land of the rope-trick, or whatever.

Smith is way off the mark when he claims: "Unlike the Rāmāyaṇa...the Mahābhārata acknowledges its central god's identity with Viṣṇu from the start." This is simply not the case. What he cites as proof (5.22) is by no means part of the Ur-epic. Such western ad-hoc criticism is the result of inadequate acquaintance with what remains the most thorough study of Kṛṣṇa till today: Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Kṛṣṇa Caritra* (1892) now available to the English reading public in the M.P. Birla Foundation's Classics of the East series. There Bankim has painstakingly collated and sifted all the available evidence to present a picture of Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata free from the subsequent interpolations of Vaiṣṇava cults identifying him with Viṣṇu.

It is, perhaps, symptomatic of the lack of sensitivity of the Occidental mind to the Indian ethos that Smith's glowing tribute to Brook has not a word to speak about the most outstanding performance in the film: that of Mallika Sarabhai as Draupadī. She brings to her role that fire and grace which befits one described by Vyāsa as born of the sacrificial fire-altar. One of the finest scenes in the film is that in which Mallika- Draupadī, at once revolted by Bhīma's demonic killing of Duḥśāsana and impelled by the memory of his molestation, approaches the gory corpse and, in a single movement of ineffable grace, kneels and casts her unbound tresses over the bloody entrails. Mallika herself felt cramped and dissatisfied with Brook's unwillingness to explore the agony of Draupadī, five-husbanded yet with no protector, *nāthavatī anāthavat.* This impelled her to create her own production Shakti, in which she portrays on stage the plight of Draupadī through dance and recitation.

At the other end of the spectrum lies the marvellous exploration of the psyche of Draupadī in Shaoli Mitra's one-woman stage-productions *Nāthavatī Anāthavat* and *Kathā Amrita Samān* in Bengali (now in English from Stree publications, Kolkata 2006). After experiencing such productions, one realises how distant from the Indian experience are theatrical *tours-de-force* like Brook's. It is more a showing-off of his brilliance as a director in assembling an international cast than a sensitive depiction of the heart and soul of India through the most traumatic of epics in its merciless expose of human frailty and heroism.

Brook successfully creates an abiding impression in the film through his remarkably evocative and haunting use of the figure of Ambā. Casting her in the tradition of the avenging Erinyes of Greek mythology, he has the ageless Ambā relentlessly searching for a means to hunt down Bhīṣma and appearing out of mist and fog in the Pāṇḍava / Kaurava camps. What strikes a jarring note is her encounter with the Pāṇḍavas during their exile. The epic has no such encounter, Ambā having immolated herself long before their birth. However, the ominously haunting figure of Ambā undergoes a fascinating transformation in the final scene of the shooting down of Bhīṣma. Brook portrays here a woman unable to shoot the deadly arrows, wracked by an intense love-hate for Bhīṣma. She stares in anguish, willing it, yet agonising over it, as Arjuna from behind her mercilessly pierces the non-combating Bhīṣma through and through. This indeed remains a signal contribution to the Mahabharata corpus of interpretations. It is worth noting that in Brook's vision there is no sex change undergone by Ambā into Śikhaṇḍi. Somehow, she lives on ageless in an eternal quest like Rider Haggard's She-who-must-be-obeyed, kept young perhaps by the sheer fury of her insensate, all-consuming desire for vengeance, while Bhīṣma turns into the most ancient of the Kurus.

Another peculiar departure from the text lies in Brook transposing the Hiḍimba-Bhīma encounter from the post-Vāranāvata exile period to the post-dice-game exile of thirteen years. Hiḍimba was the first Pāṇḍava bride and Ghaṭotkaca the first son. To have Bhīma wed her after they have married Draupadī makes no sense, for it is the bachelor

Bhīma who gives in to her advances, and it is Kuntī, seeking allies undercover, who eagerly seizes upon this alliance fortuitously coming their way. This would not hold psychologically true for them in the Book of Exile. The absence of Vidura is another glaring lacuna.

On the other hand, there are brilliant insights such as Gāndhārī's cryptic reply, as the forest-fire nears, to Dhṛtaraṣṭra's query as to why she bandaged her eyes. She asks, "Why did you not stop me? Why did you never ask me to remove it?" He does not reply and they walk towards the flames.

If we are to speak of "fatalism" with Smith, the only sign of this can be said to lie in a peculiar weakness of character passed on from generation to generation in the Puru dynasty. This weakness is akin to that tragic flaw which Shakespeare speaks of in Hamlet as destroying all the goodness in a man. It is heralded by Nahuṣa, the first human elected as king of the gods in place of Indra, whose craving for Indra's wife Śachī drives him to perdition. His son Yayāti becomes a classic symbol of the tragedy of insensate lust, which consumes without satisfying. It blinds his descendant Śāntanu so much that he allows the Crown Prince to give up the kingdom. Śāntanu's son Vicitravīrya dies of over-indulgence in the same passion. His wives, tainted with it, are unable to accept Vyāsa in a pure frame of being, and give birth to defective sons. Even Pāṇḍu dies of lust. Vyāsa himself is the product of the sage Parāśara forcing himself upon the fisher-maid Satyavatī mid-stream in the Yamuna. It is the supreme irony of the epic that the person who becomes the de facto ruler at the end is not any Pāṇḍava, but Yuyutsu, son of Dhṛtaraṣṭra by a maid! No wonder Vyāsa cries out in despair at the end at man's deliberate rejection of salvation and the remorseless working out of the tragic flaw ingrained deep within, driving him on to destruction. Unfortunately, as far as Brook is concerned, none of this exists.

At the end, it is good to look back and realise that the epic is, in a way, the autobiography of Vyāsa, written in the third person by himself. It is he who watches and chronicles the annihilation of his own progeny. How does Vyāsa end the epic? Unlike Reza, not on a note of facile optimism, but with an anguished cry echoing down the dusty corridors of recorded time, a question that remains unanswered like Draupadī's, which rings so true even today:

> "I raise my arms and I shout—
> but no one listens!
> From Dharma come wealth and pleasure,
> why is dharma not practised?" [*Svargārohaṇa*, 5.62.]

Is anybody listening out there, or is it but only a host of phantom listeners?

16

The Mahābhārata as Represented in the Classical Contemporary Theatre of Kerala

K.G. PAULOSE

Three ancient texts, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata have moulded the mindset of Indians for centuries. The Rāmāyaṇa is the model for intra-domestic relations, the Mahābhārata for interaction with society and the Bhāgavata for spiritual purity. The Mahābhārata, unlike the other two, is not permitted to be used for regular chanting for fear of creating quarrel in the household.[1] It presents man as he is whereas the other two depict sophisticated and idealized levels of living. It is precisely because of this that the Mahābhārata is a mostly liked in theatre adaptation than the other two. In fact, the influence of the Mahābhārata on theatre is tremendous.

Bhāsa and Kālidāsa

The Mahābhārata has been a veritable source for Sanskrit dramatists to develop their themes. Bhāsa and Kālidāsa were the earliest playwrights who were inspired by the great epic. Of the two, Bhāsa revolted, often amending Vyāsa's text by suitable substitutes and filling his silence with own interpretations. Kālidāsa, on the other hand, often compromised to the epic narrative.

Bhāsa was sympathetic towards the characters who were marginalized, neglected and condemned in the epic—Karṇa, Duryodhana, Ghaṭotkaca, etc., and in his rendering, he turned them into heroes. Kṛṣṇa, Dharmaputra or even Arjuna became pale in their presence. In Pancarātra, Bhāsa goes to the extent of suggesting an alternative to Vyāsa.[2] Vyāsa tells us that there is no alternative to bloodshed to solve the Kuru-Pāṇḍava feud. It is an indirect approval for warfare. But Bhāsa amends and corrects that there are alternatives, the way of negotiations, peaceful settlements. The indictment here is on the *pitāmahas* and *ācāryas*. In spite of their having eyes they behaved like the blind father. Had they sincerely wished and worked, they could have avoided the horrible war. Thus Bhāsa envisioned a Mahābhārata without a Kurukṣetra! Bhāsa was rebellious, and theatre liked this rebellion. Kālidāsa, on the other hand, was soft. His Śakuntalā differs not much from that of Vyāsa, the minor changes brought about were by the compulsion of time. These two trends, the interpretative mood of Bhāsa and the compromising tone of Kālidāsa are visible throughout the history of theatre, the greater influence of course, being that of the former.

Classical Theatre

The only living tradition of the ancient Sanskrit theatre today is the Kūtiyāṭṭam, of Kerala, declared recently by UNESCO as the intangible heritage of humanity. Kūtiyāṭṭam theatre is the continuation of Bharata's theatre, but it has improvised considerably Bharata's concepts. The actor in Bharata is an imitator; in Kūtiyāṭṭam he is a narrator and interpreter too. The actor himself turns out to be a stage on which multiple characters, through the technique of transformation of roles, enact their roles. Also, while indulging in imaginative acting, the actor breaks the frame of the dramatic text and context. Liberated from the text, he creates his own sub-texts providing exciting moments to the connoisseurs on each performance. Bhāsa hides many such situations in his plays, which provide ample scope for the actors to exhibit their histrionic talents in different ways.[3]

It is interesting to note that the first major contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit theatre is a play that makes a harmonious blend of the two streams of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The Kalyāṇasugandhika Vyāyoga,[4] arranges symbolically a meeting between the two brothers, the Hanumān of the Rāmāyaṇa and Bhīma of the Mahābhārata. This is very much popular in almost all theatrical forms like Kūtiyāṭṭam, Kathakaḷi, Tuḷḷal, etc. The major plays that followed[4], like Subhadrādhanañjaya and Tapatīsvaṃvara, drew their theme from the Mahābhārata. The presentation of these plays marked the deviation from the national pattern[5]. Shortly after this the Bhāsa plays became the favourites of Kerala actors. When Kūtiyāṭṭam moved to temple premises, the Rāmāyaṇa plays gained dominance, the principal emotion depicted being devotion.[6]

The emergence of Kathakaḷi gave another impetus to the theatrical movements in the classical field. Rāmanāṭṭam, the proto-type of Kathakaḷi, continued the Rāmāyaṇa legacy. But at a mature stage later, plays of Kottayam Thampuran brought the Mahābhārata to the centre-stage[7]. Heroism followed by love as in Nalacaritam, replaced *bhakti* practised by the Rāmāyaṇa plays. These have become the main features of *Kathakaḷi* now. The most important pieces in the *Kathakaḷi* repertoire are drawn from the Mahābhārata. In some cases, they rely more on Veṇīsaṃhāra.

Anti–hero cult

An important characteristic feature of Kerala classical theatre is its adherence to anti-hero cult. The traditional heroes like Dharmaputra or Śrī Kṛṣṇa are insignificant minor characters on the stage whereas anti-heroes like Dhuryodhana, Duḥśāsana etc. reign supreme. Their roles are donned by major characters. Bhāsa is at his best when he depicts the *pratināyakas.*[8] The traditional anti-heroes command respect in Bhāsa's plays. He is sympathetic towards Kaikeyī in the *Pratimānāṭaka.* Rāma is pale before Bāli in the *Abhiṣeka,* unable to answer his questions. Karṇa is held in high esteem in the *Karṇabhāra.* The *Ūrubhaṅga* extols Duryodhana. Bhāsa thus rebels against the traditional readings of the *itihāsa.* He re-reads these texts and reveals the inner struggle of these characters who are ordinarily condemned as evil.

Sympathy for the anti-heroes endeared Bhāsa to the Kerala audience. Consequently the Kūtiyāṭṭam and Kathakaḷi theatre became stages for the display of the valour and struggle of the anti-heroes. Bāli, Rāvaṇa, Duryodhana etc. have become the major characters in the classical theatre. The real heroes like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, etc. have been withdrawn to the background. Thus the theme of the Kerala theatre became abundant with battles and killings.

Another point of conflict with traditional view is in the treatment of *rasa.* Most of the interesting scenes in which *rasa* is delineated are cases of *rasābhāsa* in the technical sense. Love in these instances are not mutual, for example, Rāvaṇa's love for Sītā, Kicaka's love for Draupadī etc. But their exquisite beauty surpasses all the definitions of poetic propriety.[9]

Contemporary Theatre

There is a vibrant contemporary Sanskrit theatre culture in Kerala. The heroes there are Duryodhana, Karṇa, Duṣyanta, etc. drawn from the Mahābhārata. But they are not repetitions of Vyāsa's characters, but new creations, novel interpretations. The presence of the Mahābhārata in the classical and contemporary theatre of Kerala is not in the form of direct readings of Vyāsa; they are all re-readings. Theatre reads and re-reads the epic. Take for example the interpretation of the *Ūrubhaṅga* on the contemporary stage: Duryodhana (*Ūrubhaṅga*) is not the Duryodhana of Vyāsa or

Bhāsa. There are three Duryodhanas in the *Ūrubhaṅga*, the valiant hero, an ordinary mortal perplexed when facing death and the third, a different person strange to himself. The third is presented as a teyyam standing on the stills.[10]

The play starts with a description of the fight. The cruelty of war is portrayed through the words of several characters. This is followed by the entry of Duryodhana; he drags himself along the ground, his thighs being broken. Bhāsa has compared him to Vāsuki; after the churning of the milky ocean, crushed floating with its hood withdrawn.[11] Vāsuki is not the hero or the beneficiary of the churning; he is only a tool. Death is the hero and war is the villain. War is the ultimate victor. Those who fought the war crawl with their hoods crushed. Duryodhana sees his preceptor burning in anger, ready to smash everything. The terrible vow of Balabhadra is to annihilate all the Pāṇḍavas for treachery they have committed on Duryodhana. But when he came to know that the cheater was none other than his brother, he stands freezed! On the other side he sees the son of his preceptor-Aśvathāmā. Treachery wins and he becomes one among the immortals!

There is one more fascinating image in the second half of the verse: *Bālavratam grāhitaḥ*. Face to face to death everybody becomes innocent like a child. Duryodhana comes to know the value of love for the first time – he sees his mother with a new eye. Her eyes, through tightly covered, turn wet. All through the drama she calls her Suyodhana, 'Oh! Valiant fighter'! He wants to live more on the earth. He desires to be born to the same mother again. If he gets another life, he would not live it as he did. Death has taught many things to him. His misdeeds haunt him, and love sprouts in his mind. This is not the old text. It is a new commentary, interpretation or vision. This can be read as a play against war, against treachery, against cheating, also as a play of love when a man relieved sees his naked self himself and longs for another life to live a better life.

The *Karṇabhāra*[12] raises a big social issue: the way a society reacts to one when he is a *sūtaputra* and again as a *sūryaputra*. The play can thus be a defense for Mandal on for twenty-seven per cent reservation! The play raises higher questions; Karṇa believes in values but becomes a victim of cheating. He realizes the treachery when death confronts him, but he is unable to escape from the trap. That is the tragedy of Karṇa. Karṇa's burden is not his actions; on the contrary it is his belief in values. Alas! These are not real values, but artificial and counterfeit ones!

The relevance of the Mahābhārata is not lost by time. It contains in itself several layers of meaning. Every age reads what it needs. And theatre is the best medium for such re-readings.

NOTES

1. It is interesting to note in this context that the ninth century critic Ānandavardhana considers Mahābhārata as a *pūrvapakṣa*. The end according to him is the Harivaṁśa where one attains the bliss by conquering all desires (*tṛṣṇākṣayasukha*). Does he mean that Mahābhārata arouses only *tṛṣṇās* without really answering to the real challenges of life?
2. At the end of a sacrifice, Duryodhana offers *dakṣiṇā* to Droṇa. Droṇa can ask for anything. The preceptor demands, as *dakṣiṇā*, the restoration of half of the Kindgom to the Pāṇḍavas. This is accepted on condition of discovering the Pāṇḍavas within five nights. (Hence the title *pañcarātra*). On the advice of Bhīṣma, the Kauravas carry away the cattle of Virāṭa king. They were defeated in a rescue operation led by Arjuna. This leads to the discovery of the Pāṇḍavas. As had been promised Duryodhana shares the Kingdom with the Pāṇḍavas and everything ends happily. The disastrous war in averted. The play in three acts belong to the *Samavakāra* type of *rūpakas*.
3. For more details – *Kūtiyāṭṭam Theatre: The Earliest Living Tradition*, K.G. Paulose, D.C. Books, Kottayam, Kerala, 2006
4. *Bhīma in search of Celestial Flowers*, K.G. Paulose, Bharatiya Book Corporation, New Delhi, 2001

5. *Vyaṅgyavyākhyā*, the stage manual for the presentation of the two dramas.
6. *Kūtiyāṭṭam* became confined to temple theatres by 14th Century. Rāmāyaṇa plays became more popular during this period. *Kūtiyāṭṭam* came to be performed on public stages in the latter half of twentieth century.
7. *Bakavadham*, *Kalyāṇasaugandhikam*, *Kirmīravadham* and *Nivātakavacakalakeyavadham.* Theme for the last three are drawn from the Mahābhārata.
8. Bhāsa has his own assesment of the epic characters which differed fundamentally from that of Vyāsa. Duryodhana, Śalya, Karṇa, Balarāma, etc. are not the same as conceived by Vyāsa. Bhāsa casts aspersion even in the character of Kṛṣṇa. In *Dūtavākyam* he challenges through Duryodhana Kṛṣṇa's right to be an envoy in bringing about peace among kinsmen as he himself had set an example otherwise by killing his own uncle. Following are the plays of Bhāsa the themes of which are drawn from the Mahābhārata - *Pañcarātra*, *Dūtaghaṭotkaca*, *Ūrubhaṅga*, *Madhyamavyāyoga*, *Dūtavākya* and *Karṇabhāra*. Ghaṭotkaca's role as an envoy is Bhāsa's own invention.
9. These eyes, drinking heartily the elixir of her charm.
   In turn, have got their reward, my mind is much gratified
   Oh, when could these twenty arms marked with the scars of the brave
   Get delight by clasping her whole body, soft as flowers?

   In Act III of Śaktibhadra's *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*, there is a śloka beginning with *Panadrūparasāyanasya bahutha* uttered by Rāvaṇa. Seated in his puṣpaka vimāna hovering over Śrī Rāma's tapovana, he notices Sīta on the ground. His ten heads with varied *sthāyis* are regaled by Sīta's bewitching beauty, that too vying with each other and Rāvaṇa is confused.

   The process of demonstrating the varied emotions exhibited by the heads is really a challenging feat especially since only the actor's eyes are employed for the same. It begins by first identifying the particular head among the ten (five on one side, four on the other and one at the centre) that notices the remote figure of Sīta. Here, Actor's eyes could reflect the appalling depth at which the object is as seen from the vimāna. Thereafter he zooms it on to be presented before the audience as seen in a close-up shot. Small wonder that *netrābhinaya's* potentialities blossom in full in this sophisticated, cumbersome exercise.
10. *Ūrubhaṅga* directed by Kavalam Narayana Panicker.

11. Glorious, smeared with blood which is like the sandal paste of war
In infant's role now, crawling with dusty arms on the ground,
He looks like Vāsuki plying exhausted in the sea
After the churning when released by gods and the demons.

Looked in this way, the discussion regarding the play being tragedy or not seems to be ridiculous. Duryodhana is not the hero. He is only a tool. War is the hero as well as the villain. It is the final triumph of war at all ages that Bhāsa has depicted in this drama.

12 *Karṇabhāra* directed by Chandradasan, Lokadharmi Tripunithura

SECTION IV

Puruṣārtha

17

Puruṣārthas: Values of Life

D. PRAHLADACHAR

One of the most significant features that distinguish Indian philosophy from the foreign systems of philosophy, is the view that values occupy the foremost place in the life of a man. The *śrutis*, particularly, the Upaniṣads, speak very often of the final goal of life. Apart from the *śrutis* which the Indian tradition considers as *apauruṣeya*, the *smṛtis* which include the Purāṇas, Itihāsas, and *Dharma*śāstra literature, also consider values as the most important things in the life of a man, for only by realizing them would his life be considered fruitful. Following this stand of the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, Indian thinkers irrespective of the school of philosophy they might follow, have consistently given utmost importance to values. It is noteworthy that even the Cārvāka, Bauddha, and Jaina philosophers who disregard the śrutis and the smṛtis as invalid, agree with the rest when it comes to the importance of values. The Sanskrit word for 'values of life' is *puruṣārtha*, which means, "That which is desired by a person." However, it does not mean that any trivial thing desired by some person or the other, even an uneducated or uncultured one, is a *puruṣārtha*. Instead, only such objects are regarded as *puruṣārtha* as deserve to be desired by discerning persons. In fact, just as man desires something and pursues its means, animals also desire many things and pursue the means to them. The *Hitopadeśa* says:

> *āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṃ ca sāmānyametad paśubhirnarāṇām/*
> *jñānaṃ hi teṣāṃ adhiko viśeṣaḥ jñānena hīnaḥ paśavo bhavanti*

Hunger, sleep, fear, and sex are common to man and beasts; *jñāna*, i.e., reflective consciousness, is the one that is special to man. Those who lack it are one with the beast.

It does not mean that beasts are totally unaware of what they need to do to satisfy their needs. They know very well that a particular kind of food and water can remove their hunger and quench their thirst, and they search for them. But unlike man, they appear to be guided in their behaviours merely by their instinct, whereas man knows many more things such as the consequences of his acts, the past and the future, and such other things that a beast cannot conceive of. As the *Hitopadeśa* says, some appetites are common to man and beast. But while the behaviour of an animal to satisfy its desires is restricted to the present, man who can consciously organize all the means to satisfy his desires may tend to be very selfish and in his efforts to satisfy his natural appetites may go down to a level below even that of the beasts. Thus the reflective consciousness that distinguishes man from animal may instead become a serious defect in him, for it is found, in many cases, that instead of become a tool for his elevation, it has become instrumental in dragging him down to the bottom from which he has no escape. It is in this context that the Indian philosophers think that the śāstras, help a person determine what is right and wrong through discussions on the nature of the self, its relation with other selves and the physical world, the nature of the Supreme Being, and other related issues. Guided by the śāstras and other works that are considered as *adhyātma-vidyā*, the person will be in a position to judge what is right and will also get the idea of the state of unalloyed bliss called *mokṣa*. The Indian tradition considers these two, viz., the right, i.e., *dharma* and *mokṣa* as the higher values of life. Though the two, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, are the higher values and their pursuit is regarded as an ideal way of leading one's life, there is also a difference between the two. While *mokṣa* is just an end, *dharma* is also a means as it helps the person to realize the other higher value. In addition to these two, the *śāstras* hold that there are two more values that a person should strive to realize in his life. They are *artha* and *kāma*—wealth and pleasure, which are given a lower status. They are considered inferior to *dharma* and *mokṣa*, for the realization of just these two does not make a person 'perfect.' By the above analysis it is clear that the Indian tradition considers the *puruṣārtha-catuṣṭaya*—the foursome of the *puruṣārthas*, as a set of two pairs, i.e., *artha* and *kāma* in the one, and *dharma* and *mokṣa* in the other, with the former pair being empirical and hence of a lower standard, and the latter pair being spiritual and thus of a higher order. One aspect that is common to both pairs is that one of the two is the means, the other is the end. In the former pair, *artha* is the means and *kāma* is the end. Similarly, in the latter, *dharma* is the means and *mokṣa* is the end. An interesting point to be noted here is that both pairs, whether they be empirical or spiritual, contain pleasure as the end. For in spite of the distinguishing features such as permanence and impermanence, and association of pain and absence of pain, both of the latter elements, viz., *kāma* and *mokṣa* are essentially of the nature of pleasure only. This leads to the assumption that according to Indian philosophy, whatever is the pair of values that a person may pursue, in the end what is sought to be gained is always pleasure only. This assumption, whether we like it or not, gives rise to the pertinent question: Is the Indian tradition fundamentally hedonistic?

Attempts have been made to tackle this question in different ways[1]. It was pointed out that the Indian view never held that pleasure is worthy of being sought for. It only draws our attention to the factual position that pleasure is always desired, and never states that it is desirable. In support of this stand, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*[2] is cited, which disapproves of the pursuit of *preyas* which stands for common pleasure, while the other pleasure

śreya-s, which is extraordinary, is recognized as the only kind of pleasure deserving of being desired. In other words, the Indian conception of values does not hold that pleasure is always good and is worthy of being sought by man, and therefore, cannot be dubbed as hedonistic. However, the question may again be raised whether the Indian philosophy holds that psychologically it is a fact that man always seeks pleasure and thus is hedonistic. The question is replied to by citing the instances of certain rituals such as *vaiśvānareṣṭi* enjoined by the Veda. Here the agent of the ritual, who is the father, performs the sacrifice for the well-being of the male child, rather than for his own benefit. Another instance observed in our mundane life is that of a mother who devotes herself to the care of her child. Here, the mother gets some pleasure while attending to the care of her child. However, she thinks of it as secondary, the primary being the pleasure of the child. Similarly, many statements are available in the *smṛti-s* exhorting people to acquire wealth and use it for the sake of doing good to others. It may be observed here that in all the three cases cited above, the Indian conception of values holds that man should seek the values of others, considering the pleasure obtained by the seeker of the value as just secondary. But the question that still remains is that when a person pursues the values for the sake of his own self, is the end only the pleasure? In a way, the question is already answered by drawing our attention to the advice given by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* to pursue the path of *śreya-s* and to abandon the pursuit of *preya-s*. *Śreya-s* i.e., supreme bliss, is considered by the Upaniṣads as identical with the self.

Therefore, the attainment of supreme bliss is nothing but the attaining of the self-realization. Since the desire to attain self-realization cannot be identified with the desire for pleasure, it can be said that the Indian tradition of advocating *śreya-s* as *puruṣārtha* can never be charged with being hedonistic. However, it can be argued that as the tradition, considers *kāma* which is of the nature of pleasure different from *śreya-s*, as *puruṣārtha-s*, it cannot escape the charge. The explanation that the tradition considers *kāma* as just the desired and does not hold it to be desirable, does not appear to be satisfactory. For just as *dharma* and *mokṣa* are called *puruṣārtha* in the sense that they are desirable, *artha* and *kāma* also should be accepted as being termed as *puruṣārtha* in the sense that they are *eṣṭavya*—desirable. So the question remains how the Indian conception of values which names *artha* and *kāma* as *puruṣārtha* in the same vein in which it names *dharma* and *mokṣa* so, escape the charge of being hedonistic? We feel that a convincing answer to this question can be found in the Mahābhārata itself, in the Śāntiparvan.[3]

One day, having listened to the preachings of the grandsire Bhīṣma lying on a bed of arrows and waiting for *uttarāyaṇa* to leave his body, Yudhiṣṭhira returns to his abode and poses a pertinent question to his brothers, and to Vidura who was also present. The question was, the existence of the world, it is said, is dependent upon *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*. Among these three, which is the highest, which one is of the middle order, and which one is the lowest?[4]

Vidura, the most revered for his erudition in *dharmaśāstra*, replied first: "It is only because of *dharma* that sages succeed in their penance. It is only due to *dharma* that all the worlds are firmly established. It is with the strength of *dharma* that gods are firmly settled in heaven. Even the *artha* is a beneficiary if it is rooted in *dharma*. O king! *dharma* is the best virtue, whereas *artha* is the middle one and *kāma* is the lowest. The wise have stated thus.[5]

It is obvious here that Vidura was just echoing what the entire Vedic literature and later the whole of the *smṛti* literature repeatedly emphasized. It is well known that each of the divisions of the Veda such as Mantra, Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad inculcates moral truths and lays stress on the importance of virtuous conduct. The Upaniṣads, known as *brahmavidyā*, though having Brahman for their main purport, often inculcate moral qualities such as self-control, tranquility, filial piety, etc., that a man desiring to lead a noble life ought to possess. The Brāhmaṇa portion of the Veda, which is regarded as *karmakāṇḍa* as it deals extensively with rituals, mentions the concept of *ṛṇa* predominantly. The three-fold indebtedness that it states is *devarṇa* (obligation to the gods), *ṛṣi-ṛṇa* (obligation to the sages), and *pitṛ-ṛṇa* (obligation to one's ancestors)—is such that a person intending to discharge all the three obligations will have to strictly adhere to the *smṛti-s* preaching various types of *dharma*-s, viz., *nitya, naimittika*, and *kāmya*, and also *sādhāraṇa* and *asādhāraṇa dharma-s.* The Indian tradition believed that the term *dharma* which etymologically means "what holds together," is literally true to its sense as it is the *dharma* being the basis of all kinds of order whether social, moral, or spiritual, that holds the universe from crumbling. The Mahābhārata elsewhere refers to this nature of *dharma*, stating *dhāraṇāt dharmaṃ ityāhuḥ dharmeṇa vidhṛtāḥ prajāḥ.*

When Vidura proclaimed that *dharma* is supreme among the three, he had all this in his mind. When Vidura, after thus extolling the virtues of *dharma* , concluded his remarks, Dhanañjaya, i.e., Arjuna who was hailed for his expertise in the sciences of economics and commerce, contradicted Vidura in upholding the supremacy of *artha.* His concept of *artha* is very large, encompassing all sources of wealth such as agriculture, trade and commerce, cattle rearing, and various kinds of craftsmanship.[6] He appears very pragmatic when he says that if there is no *artha, dharma* and *kāma* also cannot exist. It is only the person who is endowed with *artha,* who can practice *dharma* in the best way. The pleasure that others cannot even dream of can be obtained by him who is *arthavān.*[7]

It is interesting that while justifying the supremacy of *artha*, Arjuna points out the all-pervasive influence of *artha* at all times. There is none who does not desire *artha*. He says, in a rather śāstra-ic way, "Even those ascetics with matted hair and clad with deer skin, smeared with mud all over their bodies, and those who are known as having conquered their senses and have shaven heads, all of them toil, every day, for the sake of *artha.*[8] Arjuna's further remarks are even more interesting. He says, "There are some people who desire to attain heaven. However, thinking that *artha* can help them in their endeavor, they put all their efforts into attaining *artha*. Theists and atheists are known for their divergent views. Yet, when it comes to *artha*, they share a similar attitude.[9]

While thus highlighting the predominance of *artha* in our day-to-day life, a statement made by Arjuna with regard to ignorance and to knowledge—*aparajñānaṃ. tamobhūtaṃ prajñānaṃ* tu *prakāśatā* ("Ignorance is darkness and knowledge is light") probably prompts Madhva to analyse as follows:

> '*Artha* is of two kinds—divine and mundane (material). The divine *artha* is knowledge. The mundane is wealth in the form of gold, etc. Knowledge, the divine *artha* has a dual relation with *dharma*. It is both instrumental and the end of *dharma*. The divine *artha* is related with *mokṣa* also. For it is knowledge that liberates man. As a matter of fact, the two *artha*-s—the divine and the mundane—are related between themselves. If the wealth is properly made use of, it may help man acquire knowledge."[10]

When Arjuna had thus propounded the supremacy of *artha*, it was then the turn of the twins Nakula and Sahadeva. At the outset, they approved what Arjuna had stated. "The person always, whether he is just sitting, lying down or walking, with all the means in his control, should strengthen all his resources through which he is striving to earn the *artha*. *Artha* is the dearest, and indeed very difficult to earn. If he succeeds in his efforts to earn the *artha*, there is no doubt that he will get all that he desires."[11]

Having thus approved Arjuna's stand, they seem to add a word of caution: The *artha* associated with *dharma* and the *dharma* associated with *artha* are like honey mixed with nectar. Hence, when we speak of the best of the *tṛvarga*, we mean both these two. If a person lacks *artha* he will not get the *kāma* he desires. Similarly, if he is not a follower of *dharma* how would he get the *artha* ? People are afraid of him who is devoid of both *artha* and *dharma*. Therefore, one who wants to earn *artha* should give prominence to *dharma*. In short, one should practice *dharma* first and then seek *artha* in association with *dharma*. Only then can he desire for *kāma* for *kāma* is the result obtained by the one who has earned the *artha*.[12]

We may notice here that Nakula and Sahadeva, though they first appear to be fully endorsing the view of Arjuna, they later change their track and support the view of Vidura. This is clear when they say, *dharmapradhānena sādho'rthaḥ saṃyatātmanā'* ("*artha* must be earned by all means, but the person while doing so should have control over his senses, and should give prominence to *dharma*"). It may be concluded that Nakula and Sahadeva followed a middle path, but with a tilt in the balance towards Vidura. It was the mighty Bhīma who surprises all by differing with the views expressed earlier. Without any hesitation, he declares '*kāmo viśiṣyate*' ("*kāma* exceeds the other two"). In support of his view, he argues, *nākāmaḥ kāmayatyarthaṃ nākāmo dharmam-icchati* ("if one has no *kāma* one cannot desire *artha* ; if one has no *kāma* one cannot desire *dharma*; if one has no *kāma* one cannot desire even *kāma*).

Kāma is all-pervasive

Even sages who live on fruits or roots, or just on air, do penance because they have the desire to do so. And those who engage themselves in teaching the Vedas or in the study of the Vedas, in performing annual ceremonies of their ancestors, in sacrifices, in receiving offerings, they do so as they desire them. Even traders, farmers, cowherds, carpenters, artisans, all of them do their jobs because of the desire only. People will even enter the ocean if impelled by desire. This *kāma* has various forms. There was never any human being in the past who did not have desire, there is none at present, and there will be none in future. The essence is this—*dharma* and *artha* are totally dependent on *kāma.* Just as butter from curds, *kāma* becomes manifest from *artha* and *dharma* . Ghee is better than butter-milk, fruits and flowers are better than a bare tree, and *kāma* is better than *dharma* and *artha.* Just as honey comes from a flower, *kāma* yields pleasure. *Kāma* is the root-cause of *dharma* and *artha. Kāma* is one with the two.[13]

These are the arguments put forth by Bhīma to establish the supremacy of *kāma* in the *tṛvarga.* The reasons given by him to justify his view are indeed very strong: The term *kāma,* in the context of discussing the *puruṣārtha-s,* is normally taken in the sense of pleasure. Since pleasure is such that it is desired by all, the term '*puruṣārtha*' meaning "that desired by man" appears to be quite appropriate also, if used with regard to *kāma* meaning pleasure. But when we go through the arguments of Bhīma, it must be noted that he does not seem to use the term *kāma* in the sense of "pleasure." Consider his very first sentence, "*nākāmaḥ kāmayatyarthaṃ nākāmo dharmam-icchati*" If *kāma* here meant "pleasure," it would mean that according to Bhīma, one who does not have pleasure will not desire for *artha,* etc., which is obviously absurd. The same would be the case with his succeeding arguments also. On the other hand, all his arguments are quite convincing, if the word is taken in the sense of desire.

Thus, according to Bhīma, the three values of life as we generally believe, are virtue, wealth, and desire, rather than virtue, wealth, and pleasure. With so many illustrations, what Bhīma wants to establish is the all-pervasive nature of desire in the activities of human beings, irrespective of their natures and inclinations. One may be an ascetic performing severe penance, or an erudite scholar having mastery of the Vedas and the śāstra-s. Or one may be a layman like a farmer or a carpenter toiling the whole day for his livelihood. Whoever he may be, it is his desire to do the work that gives him the necessary strength to begin and to continue with the work that he has started. The famous statement by Duryodhana– '*jānāmi adharmaṃ na ca me pravṛttiḥ, jānāmi adharmaṃ na ca me nivṛttiḥ*' can be cited here to show the dominant role that desire plays in the life of man. Duryodhana had the knowledge of right and wrong. Yet, since he did not have the necessary desire to do the right things, he could not do them. Again, knowing well that what he was going to do was a wrong thing, he was forced into it as he was prompted by his desire. The remark by Bhīma while concluding sums up the essence of his argument: *kāmaḥ dharmārthayoryoniḥ, kāmaśca tadātmakaḥ* ("desire is the root cause of *dharma* and *artha* ; *kāma* is one with them"). The illustration of butter and curds given by Bhīma earlier makes his remark even more clear. Before churning the curd, it is not the case that the butter did not exist. It was there in the curd, in every drop of it. It was one with the curd. Similarly *kāma* pervades *dharma* and *artha*. In every moment of practicing *dharma* and earning *artha*, desire has a role to play. Realizing the significance of the role of *kāma* highlighted by Bhīma, Madhva, in his *Mahābhārata Tātparyanirṇaya* as follows: The term '*kāma*' can etymologically signify two meanings. One is "the object desired." Another is just "desire." When *kāma* is taken in the first sense, it may be noted that all the other *puruṣārtha-s*, including *mokṣa*, can be grouped under *kāma* only, for they are objects of desire. As a matter of fact, *dharma*, etc., would be considered as *puruṣārtha* only when they are desired. They cease to be regarded as *puruṣārtha* when man does not desire them. Thus the end and all its means—all become *puruṣārtha* for being desired by a man. While the end *mokṣa* is, for instance, desired for its own sake, the means are desired for the sake of the end. This all-pervasive nature of *kāma*, according to Madhva, is the reason that Bhīma holds *kāma* as the supreme among all *puruṣārtha-s.*[14]

Following the remarks of Bhīma closely, Madhva points out that it is the desire that Bhīma considers as *puruṣārtha.* Having said this, Madhva further adds: Desire is of two kinds. One is of the form of a modification of the *manas.* Another is identical with the self. Desire that is a modification of the *manas* cannot be considered as a *puruṣārtha*, for the *manas* is always polluted by *rāga*, *dveṣa*, and such prejudices. However, the desire that is one with the self, but remains unmanifest in it, should be considered as a *puruṣārtha.* If such a desire is in consonance with both *dharma* and *artha*, it is the best.[15] A person should desire and strive for the manifestation of such desires in him. For such desires do good not only to the self, but also to the society in which he lives. On the other hand, if the desires of the self are in opposition to either *dharma* or *artha*, or with both, it follows that they are disastrous to both society and the individual.[16] So, just as a man, in order to achieve something in his life, has to strive hard to perform virtuous deeds and earn wealth, he has to put in all his efforts to have noble desires that make him think only of the good things, and has to do the good deeds. When *kāma* is thus taken in the sense of desire and not in the sense of pleasure, it is obvious that the Indian concept of values is free from the charge of being hedonistic.

NOTES

1. See the introduction to '*Indian Conception of Values*' by M. Hiriyanna, pp.17-22.

2. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* 1.2.2
3. Śāntiparvan, chapter. 161 (BORI Ed.)
4. *dharma cārthe ca kāme ca lokavṛttiḥ samāhitā/*
*teṣāṃ garīyān katamo madhyamaḥ ko laghuśca kaḥ//*Ibid, *śl.* 2
5. *dharmeṇaivasṣayastīrnā dharme lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitaḥ/*
dharmeṇaiva devā divigā dharme cārtaḥ samāhitaḥ// Ibid, *śl.* 7
6. *karmabhūmiriyaṃ rājanniha vārtā praśasyate/*
kṛṣivāṇijyagorakṣaṃ śilpāni vividhāni ca//
artha ityeva sarveṣāṃ karmaṇaṃ avyatikramaḥ // Ibid., *śl.*10-11
7. *na ṛte'rthena varteta dharmakāmāviti śrutiḥ/*
vijayī hyarthavāndharmamārādhayitumuttamam/
kāmaṃ ca carituṃ śakto duṣprāpamakṛtātmabhiḥ// Ibid., *śl.* 11-12
8. *jaṭājinadharā dāntāḥ pan̄kadigdhā jitendriyāḥ/*
muṇḍā nistantavaścāpi vasantyarthārthinaḥ pṛthak// Ibid., *sl.* 15
9. *arthārthinaḥ santi kecidapare svargakān̄kṣiṇaḥ . . .*
āstikā nāstikāścaiva. . .Ibid., *śl* 17-18
10. *. . : arthamevārjuna' bravīt/*
sāraṃ sa dvividho jn̄eyo daivo mānuṣa eva ca/
daivo vidyā hiraṇyādirmānuṣaḥ parikīritaḥ/
madhyamo dharma evātra sādhyaṃ sādhanameva ca
vidyāhvaya'rtho dharmasya vidyaaiva ca mucyate/
mānuṣo'rtho pi vidyāyāḥ kāraṇaṃ suprayojitaḥ// M.B.T.N. 29.44-47
11. *āsīnaśca śayānaśca vicarannapi ca sthitaḥ*
arthayogaṃ dṛḍham kuryādyogairuccāvacairapi/
asminstu vai susamvṛtte durlabhe paramapriya/
iha kāmānavapnoti pratyakṣaṃ nātra saṃśayaḥ// Ibid., *śl.* 21-22.
12. *yo'artho dharmeṇa saṃyukta dharmo yaścārthasaṃyutaḥ/*
madhvivāmṛta saṃyuktaṃ tasmādetau matāviha/
anarthasya na kāmo asti tathārtho' dharmiṇaḥ kutaḥ/
tasmādudvijate loko dharmārthādyo bahiṣkṛtaḥ/
tasmāddharmapradhānena sādhyo. Arthaḥ saṃyatātmanā/
viśvasteṣu ca bhūteṣu kalpate sarva eva hi/
dharmaṃ samācaretpūrvaṃ tathārthaṃ dharmasaṃyutam/
tataḥ kāmaṃ caretpaścātsiddhārthasya hi tatphalam// Ibid., *śl.* 23-26.
13. *kāmena yuktā ṛṣayatapasyeva samāhitāḥ/*
palāśaphalamūlāśa vayubhakṣāḥ susaṃyatāḥ/
vedopavādeṣvapare yuktāḥ svādhyāyapāragāḥ/
śrāddhayajn̄akriyāyāṃ ca tathā dānapratigrahe/
vaṇijaḥ karṣakā gopāḥ kāravaḥ śilpinastathā/
daivakarma kṛtaścaiva yuktāḥ kāmena karmasu/

samudraṃ cāviśantyanye narāḥ kāmena saṃyutāḥ/
kāmo hi vividhākāraḥ sarvaṃ kāmena santatam/
nāsti nāsīnnābhaviṣyadbhūtaṃ kāmātmakātparam/
etatsāraṃ mahārāja dharmārthāvatra saṃśritau/
navanītam yathā dadhnastathā kāmo'rthadharmataḥ/
'śreyastailaṃ ca piṇyākāddhṛtaṃ śreya udaśvitaḥ/
śreyaḥ puṣpapaphalaṃ kāsthatkāmo dharmārthayorvaraḥ/
puṣpito madhviva rasaḥ kāmātsañjāyate sukham// Ibid., *śl.* 29-35

14. *kāmyaṃhi kāmābhidhamāhuraryaḥ/*
*kamyah pumarthah saha sadhanairyat*ˇ
akamyatam yatyapumartha eva pumarthitatvaddhi pumartha uktah
M.B.T.N.29.51

15. *icchaiva kāmo'stu tathā pi naitāmṛte hi cittvaṃ ghaṭakuḍyavat syāt/*
sārastataḥ saiva cidātmakā pi sā cetanā gūḍhatanuḥ sadaiva//
M.B.T.N.29.54

16. *icchasyayaṃ te trividho hi vedyo dharmārthayuktaḥ paramo mato' tra/*
ekavirodhī yadi madhyamo'sau dvayorvirodhī tu sa eva nīcaḥ//
M..B.T.N. 29.55

18

महाभारतोक्तो धर्मपुरुषार्थः

सातकड़ि-मुखोपाध्यायः

व्यासस्तुतिः

श्रीमद्व्यासपयोनिधिर्निधिरसौ सत्सूक्तिपङ्क्तिस्फुरन्-
मुक्तानामनवद्यहृद्यविपुलप्रद्योतिविद्यामणिः ।
शान्तिः क्षान्तिधृती दयेति सरितामेकान्तविश्रान्तिभू-
र्भूयान्नः सततं मुनीन्द्रमकरश्रेणीश्रयः श्रेयसे ।।1।।

महाभारतमहिमा

पाराशर्यवचःसरोजममलं गीतार्थगन्धोत्कटं
नानाख्यानककेसरं हरिकथासम्बोधनाबोधितम् ।
लोके सज्जनषट्पदैरहरहः पेपीयमानं मुदा
भूयाद् भारतपङ्कजं कलिमलप्रध्वंसि नः श्रेयसे ।।2।।

अयि भोः एतत्सभाध्यक्षपदमलंकुर्वाणा अनेकशास्त्रपारावारपारीणा अध्यापकश्रीमत्-प्रह्लादाचार्यमहोदयाः, राष्ट्रियपाण्डुलिपिमिशननिदेशिकाः स्वकर्मकुशलाः श्रीमत्यो डॉ. सुधागोपालकृष्णमहाभागाः, समवेताश्च अशेषशेमुषीजुष्टा विदुष्यो विद्वांसः।

अस्यां विशिष्टविद्वज्जनसंसदि विद्यावैभवविरहितोऽप्यहमाहूतोऽस्मि कस्यापि निबन्धस्योपास्थापनायेति एतद् गोष्ठीसंयोजकेभ्योऽनल्पां कृतवेदितां धारयामि।

नातितिरोहितं समेषां समुपस्थितानां यदस्मदीयनिबन्धस्य 'महाभारतोक्तो धर्मपुरुषार्थः' इत्येष उपजीव्यो विषयः। महानयं कृष्णद्वैपायनेन व्यासेन सन्दृब्धो महाभारताभिधो ग्रन्थः। कृत्स्ने जगतीतले परिज्ञातेषु वाङ्मयेषु महाभारताद् आकृत्या विपुलतरो ग्रन्थो

नावलोक्यते। किञ्चिदधिकलक्षश्लोकात्मकोऽयं ग्रन्थः, अतएव शतसाहस्रीसंहितेत्युच्यते। विषयगौरवमप्यस्य अनन्यसाधारणम्। विषयगरिमा महाभारत एवेत्थं दर्शितः –

चत्वारो एकतो वेदा भारतं चैकमेकतः ।
समागतैः सुरर्षिभिस्तुलामारोपितं पुरा ॥
महत्त्वे च गुरुत्वे च ध्रियमाणं ततोऽधिकम् ।
महत्त्वाद् भारवत्त्वाच्च महाभारतमुच्यते ॥(1/1/208–209 कख) इति ।

अयमत्र प्रश्नः–बहुषु वाङ्मयप्रकारेषु महाभारतं कस्मिंस्तावत् प्रकारविशेषेऽन्तर्भवतीति। ?

तत्रेदमुच्यते–स्मरणातीतकालत एव महाभारतम् इतिहासनाम्ना व्यपदिश्यते। श्रूयते हि छान्दोग्योपनिषदि–"ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽध्येमि यजुर्वेदꣳसामवेदमाथर्वणं चतुर्थमितिहासपुराणं पञ्चमम्" इत्यादि (7/1/2) ।

तच्छ्रुतिव्याख्यायां भगवान् श्रीमच्छङ्कराचार्य आह – "इतिहासपुराणं पञ्चमं वेदं, वेदानां भारतपञ्चमानां वेदं व्याकरणम्।" इत्यादि । अनेन महाभारतस्य न केवलम् इतिहासत्वमपि तु पञ्चमवेदतयाऽभ्यर्हितत्वमपि प्रत्यपादि। तथा चोक्तं महाभारतेऽपि –

तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण व्यस्य वेदं सनातनम् ।
इतिहासमिमं चक्रे पुण्यं सत्यवतीसुतः ॥ (1/1/52) इति ।

लोके महाभारतस्य महाकाव्यत्वप्रसिद्धिः सुप्रथितैव। अस्याः प्रसिद्धेर्मूलं महाभारत एवानुसन्धेयम्। उक्तं हि तत्र –

अस्य काव्यस्य कवयो न समर्था विशेषणे। (1/1/73)

तदतिरिक्ततया महाभारतस्य धर्मार्थकामशास्त्रत्वमपि तत्रैव समुद्घोषितम्। तद् यथा–

अर्थशास्त्रमिदं प्रोक्तं धर्मशास्त्रमिदं महत् ।
कामशास्त्रमिदं प्रोक्तं व्यासेनामितबुद्धिना ॥ (1/1/186) इति ।

महाभारतस्य महिमा ह्याधुनिकेरपि बहुभिर्मनीषिभिरङ्गीक्रियते। नवयुगप्रवर्तकाः स्वामिविवेकानन्दपादा महाभारतगतमाख्यानं तद्गतोदात्तचरितानि च सम्यग् वर्णयित्वा भाषणमेकम् इत्थम् उपसमहरन् –

"वस्तुतः, रामायणं महाभारतं चेति आर्यचरितप्रज्ञयोर्विश्वकोशद्वयं तादृशीमादर्शभूतां संस्कृतिं प्रतिपादयति यामधिगन्तुं विश्वे मानवा अद्यापि अभिकाङ्क्षन्ति।" इति।

महाकविमूर्धन्यो रवीन्द्रनाथठाकुरोऽप्याह –

"आर्याणां समाजे यावत्यो लोककथा व्याकीर्णा आसन् व्यासस्ताः कृत्स्नत

एकत्र संजगृहे। न केवलं लोककथा अपि तु आर्याणां द्रढीयसो सिद्धान्तान् ऊहापोहान् चारित्राणि च एकीकृत्य आर्यजनतासामग्र्यस्य किमपि विशालमालेख्यम् उदपादयत्। तदेवालेख्यं लोके महाभारताभिधानेन प्रसिद्धिमाप। नेदं पुरुषविशेषेण विरचितमितिवृत्तमात्रम्, अपि त्विदं कस्यचित् समग्रस्य राष्ट्रस्य स्वोपज्ञः स्वाभाविकश्चेतिहासः।" इति ।

आपाततः कुरुक्षेत्रयुद्धवर्णनमेव महाभारतस्य मुख्य उपजीव्यो विषयः। इतिहासत्वात् तस्मिन् केनापि आख्यानेन भाव्यम्। कुरुपाण्डवयोर्विरोधो युद्धं चेति महाभारतस्य मूलमाख्यानम् इत्यत्र न काऽपि विप्रतिपत्तिः, सन्ति च पुनस्तत्र भूयांसि प्रत्नानि उपाख्यानानि तत्र तत्रानुस्यूतानि। किन्तु सूक्ष्मेकिकया पर्यालोचनेन सम्यगिदं प्रतिभाति यत् कुरुपाण्डवयुद्धवर्णनमात्र एव न महाभारतस्य तात्पर्यमिति। तात्पर्यं तु चतुर्वर्गोपदेशे इति निश्चप्रचम्। धर्मः, अर्थः, कामः मोक्षः –इत्येते चत्वारः पुरुषार्थाश्चतुर्वर्गनाम्ना प्रथन्ते। कृत्स्नतया तेषामेव चतुर्णां पुरुषार्थानाम् अनन्यसाधारणतया प्रतिपादनं महाभारत एवोपलभ्यते। वस्तुतस्तु पुरुषार्थप्रतिपादनस्य महाभारतमेव आकरः।

युक्तमेवोक्तं शतसाहस्र्यां संहितायाम् –

धर्मे चार्थे च कामे च मोक्षे च भरतर्षभ ।
यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित् ॥ (1/56/33) इति ।

यद्यप्यत्र चतुर एव पुरुषार्थान् विमर्ष्टुमिच्छामः स्म किन्तु निर्देशितसमयस्वल्पत्वाद् धर्मपुरुषार्थमात्र एवावधानं व्यापारयेम। मोक्षभिन्नेषु त्रिषु पुरुषार्थेषु धर्मस्य परं श्रैष्ठ्यं तस्य मोक्षोपकारकत्वं च निर्विवादम्। अतएव धर्मस्य विमर्शः सर्वथा उपपद्यत इति तर्कयामः। सर्वपुरुषार्थप्रतिपादकत्वेऽपि महाभारतस्य धर्म एव समधिकः पक्षपात इति वक्तुमुत्सहामहे। कथमिति चेत्? महाभारतसूक्तिरेवात्र प्रमाणम् –

धर्मेणैवर्षयस्तीर्णा धर्मे लोकाः प्रतिष्ठिताः ।
धर्मेण देवा दिविगा धर्मे चार्थः समाहितः ॥
धर्मो राजन् गुणश्रेष्ठो मध्यमो ह्यर्थ उच्यते ।
कामो यवीयानिति च प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ।
तस्माद्धर्मप्रधानेन भवितव्यं यतात्मना ॥ (12/161/7-8) इति ।

पूर्वमेवोक्तमस्माभिर्यत् कुरुक्षेत्रयुद्धवर्णनं न तावन्महाभारतस्य मुख्यो विषयः । अतो वीरो न तत्र प्रधानो रसः। मुख्यो विषयस्तु "यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः" इत्ययं सिद्धान्तः। अतएव समग्रे ग्रन्थे अन्यूनत्रयोदशसु श्लोकेषु धर्मस्य जय एव विस्पष्टतया उद्घोषितः। उदाहरणद्वयमत्र आकर्ण्यताम्। भीष्मपर्वणि धृतराष्ट्रं प्रति व्यासोक्तिः –

दिष्टमेतत् पुरा चैव नात्र शोचितुमर्हसि ।

न चैव शक्यं संयन्तुं यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।। (6/2/14) इति ।

तस्मिन्नेव पर्वणि युधिष्ठिरं प्रति अर्जुनोद्धृता नारदोक्तिः –

त्यक्त्वाऽधर्मं च लोभं च मोहं चोद्यममास्थिताः ।
युध्यध्वमनहंकारा यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।। (6/21/11) इति ।

अथ का नाम धर्मशब्दस्य निरुक्तिः, किं वा तन्निरुक्तिलभ्यं तात्पर्यमिति प्रश्ने ब्रूमः – महाभारते धर्मशब्दस्य द्वे निरुक्ती दर्शिते। प्रथमा तु यथा धनपूर्वकाद् 'ऋ' धातोर्मक्-प्रत्यये धर्मशब्दो निष्पद्यते। तेन पार्थिवापार्थिवसर्वविधधनप्राप्तिहेतुरेव धर्मः। द्वितीया तु, धारणार्थात् धृञ्धातोर्मन्प्रत्ययेऽपि धर्मशब्दसिद्धिः। उभयतात्पर्यव्याख्यानार्थमुक्तं च महाभारते –

धनात् स्रवति धर्मो हि धारणाद् वेति निश्चयः । (12/91/15) इति ।

अथवा–

धारणाद् धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ।
यत् स्याद् धारणसंयुक्तं स धर्म इति निश्चयः ।। (8/49/50) इति ।

उक्तोभयनिरुक्तिलभ्यौ द्वावेवार्थौ अस्माभिर्ग्राह्यौ। अर्थतः, येन व्यष्टिभावेन समष्टिभावेन च लोको व्यवस्थाप्यते, यद्बलेन सर्वेषां मनुजानां लोकयात्रा निर्वहति, तथा च यः खलु साधुनोपायेन अर्थकामादिलाभप्रयोजको भवति, स एव धर्म इति संज्ञायते।

अविगीत आचार एव धर्म इति शास्त्रान्तरोक्तिः प्रमाणीकरोति। अविगीते खलु आचारे शारीरं सदनुष्ठानं साधुर्मानसव्यापार इत्युभयमपि अन्तर्भवति। धर्मो नाम ऐहिकपारत्रिकेत्युभयविधस्य कल्याणस्य निदानम्। धर्मस्य लोकस्थितिश्चित्तशुद्धिश्चेति परिणामद्वयम्। चित्तशुद्धिश्च पुनः परम्परया चरमपुरुषार्थस्य मोक्षस्यानुकूल्यं विदधातीति पर्यवस्यति।

धर्मनिर्णये किं प्रमाणमिति प्रश्ने यथा महाभारते तथा मन्वादिधर्मशास्त्रेष्वपि बहुधा विमृष्टम्। धर्मे श्रुतिरेव प्रथमं प्रमाणमित्यत्र सर्वशास्त्राणामैकमत्यम्। उक्तं च महाभारते –

श्रुतिप्रमाणो धर्मो हि वृद्धानामिति भाषितम् ।
सूक्ष्मा गतिर्हि धर्मस्य बहुशाखा ह्यनन्तिका ।। (3/200/2) इति ।

अपि च –

सदाचारः स्मष्टतिर्वेदास्त्रिविधं धर्मलक्षणम् । (12/251/3) इति ।

समयाभावादत्र विस्तरे न प्रसज्यते।

धर्मप्रमाणविषये भगवता मनुनापि सुष्ठु प्रतिपादितम् –

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।
एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद् धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥ (2/12) इति ।

स्मृतिसदाचारादीनि सर्वाण्येव प्रमाणानि श्रुतिचोदितानीति शिष्टैः सर्वदोररीक्रियते।

महाभारतप्रतिपादिता सनातनधर्मभावना विशेषेण अवधानमर्हति। इदानीन्तने समये सनातनधर्मशब्दः संप्रदायविशेषनाम्नि रूढः। वेदप्रामाण्यवादिनां भारतीयानां द्वौ सम्प्रदायौ। ये नाम मूर्त्यादिप्रतीकोपासनाविरोधिनो वेदत्वेन मन्त्रसंहिताभागमात्रमङ्गीकुर्वन्ति ते आत्मन आर्यसमाजभुक्तान् व्यपदिशन्ति। तदितरे तत्तद्विषये मतभिन्नत्वं पुष्णन्त आत्मनः सनातनधर्मावलम्बिन उद्घोषयन्ति। अनयोः आधुनिकसम्प्रदाययोर्मिथो भूयसी प्रतिस्पर्धा दरीदृश्यते। शास्त्रीयपरम्परायां सनातनधर्म इति सम्प्रदायविशेषस्य नामधेयं नासीत्। ये तावद् धर्मा देशकालापरिच्छेदेन क्वचिच्च यथावर्णं यथावृत्ति परिपालनीयास्ते एव सनातनधर्मनाम्ना उच्यन्ते। महाभारते अन्यूनविंशतौ श्लोकेषु "एष धर्मः सनातनः" इत्ययं श्लोकपादः स्मर्यते। तदतिरिक्तेष्वपि बहुषु श्लोकेषु धर्मस्य सनातनत्वं प्रतिपादितम्। तत्र तत्र वचनस्यास्य आशयः स्तोकाद् भिद्यतेऽपि। अस्तु, विस्तरं परिहृत्य कानिचिद् उदाहरणानि पश्यामः। आरण्यपर्वणि क्षमाधर्मविवरणादनन्तरं युधिष्ठिरोक्तिः –

एतदात्मवतां वृत्तमेष धर्मः सनातनः ।
क्षमा चैवानृशंस्यं च तत्कर्ताऽस्म्यहमञ्जसा ॥ (3/3/50) इति ।

पत्युरनुगमनमेव नारीणां सनातनधर्म इत्यस्मिन् विषये सावित्र्युक्तिः –

यत्र मे नीयते भर्ता स्वयं वा यत्र गच्छति ।
मयाऽपि तत्र गन्तव्यमेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥ (3/281/20) इति ।

अथवा–

सत्यं दमस्तपः शौचं सन्तोषो ह्रीः क्षमार्जवम् ।
ज्ञानं शमो दया ध्यानमेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥ (3/177) इति ।

अत्रोक्तानां धर्माणां देशकालवर्णसम्प्रदायनिर्विशेषं सनातनत्वे कोऽपि कृतात्मा न विप्रतिपद्येत।

यद्यपि महाभारते कुलधर्मा वर्णधर्मा आश्रमधर्माश्च पृथक् पृथग् विस्तरेणोपदिष्टास्तथापि सामग्र्येण मानवधर्म एवास्य महाग्रन्थस्य मुख्य उपजीव्यो विषय इत्यत्र लेशतोऽपि संशीतिर्नास्ति। तत्र सर्वैर्मानवैः परिपालनीया धर्माः साधारणधर्मनाम्ना वा सार्ववर्णिकधर्मनाम्ना वा व्याह्रियन्ते। तद् यथा –

अदत्तस्यानुपादानं दानमध्ययनं तपः ।
अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोध इज्या धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

अन्यच्च –

आनृशंस्यमहिंसा चाप्रमादः संविभागिता ।
श्राद्धकर्मातिथेयं च सत्यमक्रोध एव च ॥
स्वेषु दारेषु सन्तोषः शौचं नित्यमसूयता ।
आत्मज्ञानं तितिक्षा च धर्माः साधारणा नृप ॥

शान्तिपर्वणि पुनश्च अक्रोधादिभृत्यमरणपर्यन्तं नव धर्माः सार्ववर्णिकधर्मतया कीर्तिताः। इमे साधारणधर्माः कायेन मनसा वाचा चानुष्ठेया इत्यपि बहुधोपदिष्टम्।

महाभारतोक्ताः साधारणधर्मा सर्वमानवसामान्येन परिपालनीया इत्यत्र इदं प्रमाणं यद् भगवद्बुद्धोपदिष्टेऽपि मार्गे एषामेव धर्माणां महिमा मुक्तकण्ठं जेगीयते इति। भगवान् बुद्धोऽपि अवैरादिधर्मान् सनातनधर्मनाम्ना व्यपदिशति। –

साधारणेषु धर्मेषु सत्यस्य महिमा सर्वातिशायी। "नास्ति सत्यसमं तपः", "यतो धर्मस्ततः सत्यं सर्वं सत्येन वर्धते" इत्यादि वचनजातमेव तत्र प्रमाणम्।

भूतार्थव्याहृतिरेव सत्यमिति लौकिको विश्वासः। किन्तु महाभारते सत्यस्य किमपि शास्त्रीयं व्यापकं लक्षणमनेकत्र उपस्थापितम्। तद् यथा –

सत्यस्य वचनं श्रेयः सत्यादपि हितं भवेत् ।
यद्भूतहितमत्यन्तं तद्वै सत्यं परं मतम् ॥ (12/316/13) इति ।

एतदप्यत्र अवधेयं यद् महाभारतकृदृषिः त्रयोदश धर्मान् सत्य एवान्तर्भावयति। येन धर्मः सत्यं च पर्यायतया परिगण्येते।

सत्येन सह अहिंसाऽपि महाधर्मतया महाभारते कीर्त्यते। तथैव शमदमादयोऽपि।

महाभारतोक्तधर्मविवरणे वैशिष्ट्यमेतत्, यदवस्थाविशेषेण धर्माधर्मव्यवस्था विपरिणाम्यते। तद्विषये शान्तिपर्वगतमापद्धर्मप्रकरणं परिशीलनीयम्।

साधारणधर्मातिरिक्ततया महाभारते ब्राह्मणादिवर्णधर्मा ब्रह्मचर्याद्याश्रमधर्माश्च विस्तरेण प्रतिपादिताः।

वस्तुतस्तु विषयोऽयं पण्डितसुखमयभट्टाचार्यप्रणीते 'महाभारते चतुर्वर्ग' इत्याख्ये ग्रन्थे, डॉ. सुरेशचन्द्रवन्द्योपाध्यायकृते Smṛti Material in the Mahābhārata–ग्रन्थे साङ्गोपाङ्गं परिशीलितः। उभाभ्यामेव ताभ्यां विद्वद्भ्यां महद् आधमर्ण्यं धारयामः।

19

Artha—Puruṣārtha

NRISINHA PRASAD BHADURI

The term *puruṣārtha* means an ultimate requirement, an aim or the end of life which a person would chase throughout his life. The word *artha* has a number of meanings in Sanskrit. The connotation and suggestion that we have from the word *artha* used in the list of *puruṣārtha*-s is so wide and all-embracing that they would put to shame the writer of Das Capital. It is indeed very hard to think that in the pre-Christian centuries the word *artha* had included within itself a socio-political as also an economic bearing. *Artha* not only meant money and wealth but a complete economic and socio-political condition in a particular geographical area i.e. a kingdom.

It is a common perception that religion and its practices have always dictated Indian society; and religious texts have dominated socio-political practice. However, it should be borne in mind that our society was directed not only by the injunctions of the Dharmaśāstra-s, but a strong parallel tradition to achieve material gain with a pinch of *dharma* overlaid was very much observed. This was the Arthaśāstra tradition.

The Arthaśāstra tradition had its support from the most elitist class –the Kṣatriya-s and the Brāmhaṇa-s who prepared a solid promotional foundation for the study of the science of politics with all its social and economic aspects. Long before Kauṭilya, who systematically formulated the rules of the science of politics in the 4th century B.C. in the *Arthaśāstra*, the Mahābhārata had used this epithet of *artha*. This came directly from the list of *puruṣārtha*-s, the word śāstra being just compounded with it.

After the fall of Bhīṣma in the great war of the Mahābhārata, the newly appointed commander Droṇa himself vindicates his education and erudition saying that in addition to the Veda-s and Vedāṅga-s he also knows the *mānavī arthavidyā*, the science of politics propounded by Manu: *vedaṃ ṣaḍaṅgaṃ vedāham arthavidyāñca mānavīm.*[1] In another place of the Mahābhārata the word *arthaśāstra* is used in its entirety. The Śāntiparvan in the Mahābhārata says that the knowledge which was resorted to by the kings and elites was called Arthaśāstra :

yaccetihāseṣu mahatsu dṛṣṭaṃ
yaccārthaśāstre nṛpa-śiṣṭa-juṣṭe //[2]

Since this *artha* in the word Arthaśāstra is directly affiliated to the import of the second *puruṣārtha*, and since this had a direct relation with the aspirations of the material prosperity, this Arthaśāstra-tradition had to combat the formidable forces of the Vedic and the Dharmaśāstra-tradition. The latter always tried to curb the popularity of *artha*-tradition that could show the way to material prosperity.

The tension can very well be felt when Bhīṣma in the Rājadharma section of the Mahābhārata proclaims the importance of the Arthaśāstra-tradition on the face of Bramhanical proclivity for Dharmaśāstra. Bhīṣma sets a clear rebuff for those who antagonised this tradition saying, 'those who establish the insignificance of *arthavidyā* – the science of *artha* as against the ritualistic *dharma*-tradition, understand neither the true meaning of *dharma* nor the real injunctions of the scriptures. In fact, in order to preach the superiority of their own institution, they impute the faults to the science of *artha*:

> *parimuṣṇanti śāstrāṇi dharmasya paripanthinaḥ /*
> *vaiṣamyam arthavidyānāṃ nirarthaṃ sthāpayanti te //*
> *parimuṣṇanti śāsrāṇi śāstra-doṣānudarśinaḥ /*
> *vijñānam arthavidyānāṃ na saṃyaga iti vartate //*[3]

We have shown the tension that stood in the way of the growth of the *artha*-tradition and this may be used as the frame of reference in our discourse of *artha* as *puruṣārtha* in the Mahābhārata. Let us briefly take a look at the war-stricken land of Hastināpura, the capital of the Kaurava-s. The great war of Kurukṣetra had just ended with a winning note for the Pāṇḍava-s, bringing total devastation to both the Pāṇḍava-s and the Kaurava-s. The victorious Pāṇḍava-s are still to enter the capital. Yudhiṣṭhira, is unable to bear the pangs of death of the close relatives. He declines to accept the kingship, and with full resignation in mind he prefers the way of an ascetic. So he says: *gamiṣyāmi vinirmukto viśoko nirmamaḥ kvacit.*[4] In such a condition, Arjuna, who is otherwise very faithful to the eldest Yudhiṣṭhira (*bhrātā ca śiṣyaśca yudhiṣṭhirasya*) shows his remonstrance saying, "we have suffered a lot, suffered for years and now why this stupidity of renouncing this world?":

> *śatrūn hatvā mahīṃ labdhvā svadharmeṇopapālitām/*
> *evaṃvidhaṃ kathaṃ sarvaṃ tyajethāḥ buddhi-lāghavāt //*[5]

We have killed the enemies and thereby got the possession of this kingdom in a way most befitting a Kṣatriya warrior. Now having subdued so many evil Kṣatriya-s why should we fall upon the profession of a beggar? No one has even praised a man living the life of a beggar, seeking morsels of food with a bowl in his hand. What will people say about him who leaves the possessions of a prosperous kingdom and opt the profession of a beggar? :

kimarthaṃ ca mahīpālān avadhīḥ krodha-mūrchitaḥ /
yena hyājijīviṣed bhaikṣyam karmaṇā naiva kasyacit //
kāpālīṃ nṛpa pāpiṣṭhām vṛttim āsādya jīvataḥ /
saṇtyajya rājyaṃ-ṛddhaṃ te loko'yaṃ kiṃ vadiṣyati //[6]

Arjuna's speech is a long one, and in the midway of his speech he begins to emit his heartfelt emotion for having suffered in the past for Yudhiṣṭhira's rigid stand and overall propensity towards *dharma*. Arjuna, however, reveals his own philosophy of life, which has a unique punch of reality and tradition. He says, "At this point of time, when we have won over the enemies, and have got to rise to the occasion, you are praising the way of renunciation. Mind it, we are born in the family of warrior kings, we have taken the possession of this earth by the prowess of the warrior, and now at this point of time you are trying to forsake the path of the righteous deeds as also the way of material gain prescribed by scriptures . . ." :

sarvārambhān samutsṛjya hṛtasvastirakiñcanaḥ /
kasmād āśaṃsase bhaikṣyaṃ kartuṃ prākṛtavat prabho //
asmin rājakule jāto jitvā kṛtsnāṃ vasundharām /
dharmārthāvakhilau hitvā vanaṃ maurkhyāt pratiṣṭhase //[7]

Dharma and *artha* are the most two important key terms referred to in Arjuna's speech, the other two being *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The use of the word *dharma* in Arjuna's speech is just a healthy prefix which acts as a kind of value addition to the ambitions of a mortal being. In fact Arjuna's speech in the Mahābhārata justifies *artha* as the best means towards the material upliftment of a king, if not of an aspirant mortal being. It should be noted that the Mahābhārata, while laying the stress on *artha*, never lost the sight of *dharma* and *kāma*, but the fourth, *mokṣa* never came within this frame of discussion because, if the kings, the leaders, the warriors became inclined towards attaining salvation, the material prosperity of the country would definitely suffer. It is for this reason Bhīṣma, while teaching the first and elementary lessons of *rājadharma* in the Śāntiparvan, says that in the lessons of politics, only the three aims of life have been preached by Brahmā—*dharma, artha,* and *kāma*; the fourth, *mokṣa* was totally a separate category with completely separate qualities:

> *yatra dharmastathaivārthaḥ kāmaścaivābhivarṇitaḥ /*
> *trivarga iti vikhyāto gaṇa eṣa svayambhuvā //*
> *caturtho mokṣa ityeva pṛthagarthaḥ pṛthaggunaḥ /*
> *mokṣasyāpi trivargo'nyaḥ proktaṃ sattvaṃ rajastamaḥ //*[8]

Coming to our original proposition of Arjuna's speech, it should be first pointed out that Arjuna with all his emphasis on *artha,* only accepts *dharma* as a tag but omits *kāma* from his list. This silence about *kāma* in Arjuna's speech does not, however, mean that the Mahābhārata is ambiguous or silent about the necessity of *kāma* in the pursuance of the ends of life. In fact, even unuttered by Arjuna, *kāma* is included within *artha,* because *kāma* means endeavour and effort, a resolve which leads one into action, and thus to material prosperity i.e. *artha.* Scholars like to call *kāma* a sort of 'biological motivating force'[9] and this broad meaning had been referred to in Bhīṣma's speech in the Mahābhārata, where he says that *kāma* means mental resolve, and though it has no physical appearance, we can feel when the mind gets its feed through the connection of *indriya*-s with their particular objects:

> *sa kāmaścitta-saṃkalpaḥ śarīraṃ nāsya dṛśyate /*
> *sa kāma iti me buddhiḥ karmaṇām phalamuttamaṃ //*
> *viṣaye vartamānānāṃ yā prītirupajāyate /*
> *indriyānāṃ ca pañcānāṃ manaso hṛdayasya ca //*[10]

We believe that the word *kāma* had been used in a very broad sense in the Mahābhārata and the sense comes down from the earlier Upaniṣad-ic texts. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says:

> *atha khalvāhuḥ kāmamayaḥ evāyaṃ purusaḥ iti. sa yathākāmo bhavati tatkratur-bhavati, yatkratur-bhavati tatkarma kurute, yatkarma kurute tadabhisampadyate.* [11]

It means that one fixes his resolve to act according to his particular desire. Here Śaṅkarācārya explains the word *kratu* as resolve, *adhyavasāya* or *niścayātmikā buddhi* which forces one into a particular action: *kratur nāma adhyavasāyaḥ niścayaḥ yadantarā kriyā pravartate.* [12]

Consider some expressions in Arjuna's speech, for example, 'how can we forsake all endeavours', *sarvārambhān parityajya,* or 'an eunuch or lazy man who does not have the power of rising to the action cannot take the hold of royal administration': *klīvasya hi kuto rājyam dīrghasūtrasya vā punaḥ,* or 'we have already given long efforts to win this country': *jitvā sarvāṃ vasundharām;* all these expressions vindicate the work of one's personal endeavour and resolve, and is the work of *kāma.* Naturally *kāma* is already in a hidden state in Arjuna's first proposition of *artha.* In fact he means to say that *kāma* had already enabled them to take all the measures and actions, which brought them the possession of the kingdom. The time had arrived to enjoy the goals achieved by efforts.

Arjuna's speech in the Mahābhārata conforms to the philosophical basics of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra.* To Kauṭilya *artha* means the subsistence of people or the acquisition of land and this *artha* is the only end that a king should pursue. Kauṭilya, however, regressively accepts the position of *kāma* in the list of *puruṣārtha*-s and says, "he should not be bereft of all happiness and thus be not deprived of the satisfaction of sensual organs": *na niḥsukhaḥ syāt.*[13] But having accepted the reality of *kāma,* he readily turns back to retain the primary importance of the *artha* and says one should indulge in the sensual satisfactions that much as would not hamper the interest of *dharma* and *artha*: *dharmārthāvirodhena kāmaṃ seveta*. All these are mutually entwined, but *artha* is the principal among the three *puruṣārtha*-s:

> *samaṃ vā trivargo'nyonyānuvandham//*
> *eko hi atyāsevito dharmārthakāmānām ātmānam itarau ca pīḍayati* [14]

Although Kauṭilya makes a synthesis of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, he ultimately retains the primary importance of *artha*, and this process he probably followed the footsteps of the Mahābhārata, because this synthetic approach had been uttered a number of times in the Mahābhārata: *dharme cārthe ca kāme ca lokavrttiḥ samāhitā.* [15]

In another place in Bhīma's speech in the Vanaparvan, we hear the same note of synthetic and proportionate approach to the *dharma-artha-kāma* triad.[16] Bhīma, who is otherwise categorically known for his physical strength and mental energy had his natural bias for the *kāma-puruṣārtha*, as is evident in the Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata (12.167.29 –40). But in other instances in the Epic, Bhīma had to adhere to the traditional sense of equal and proportionate distribution of *dharma, artha* and *kāma*. His affinity towards *kāma,* which is pronouncedly inferior to the other two ends, is shown when he hesitates while speaking for *kāma*. This is reflected when he tries to fix a particular age for pursuing particular ends. In two consecutive Vanaparvan verses Bhīma once affirms the position of *kāma* in the first phase of life and then in the next verse fixes *kāma* in the last phase, but in both of his options *artha* (or *dhana*) comes in the middle.[17] Bhīma abides by the tradition and speaks about the synthesis of *kāma, artha* and *dharma* but finally and conspicuously enough, he bursts out in praise of *artha* without which, he says, both *kāma* and *dharma* would be futile.

In fact, like *kāma* which we have explained broadly as the biological motivating force, the Mahābhārata likes to attach a broader meaning to *artha* and *dharma*. In the same Vanaparvan Bhīma defines *dharma* as:

> *dānaṃ yajñaḥ satām pūjā vedadhāraṇam ārjavam /*
> *esa dharmaḥ paro rājan balavān pretya ca ceha ca //*[18]

But anyone who can read the innermost reality of the world of the Mahābhārata would understand that this strict and literal, as also ethical and moral implication of *dharma* does not befit the purpose and aspirations of practical living. This is immediately hinted at when Bhīma jests at Yudhiṣṭhira, who was supposed to be an embodiment of *dharma*. Bhīma says, "Sir, you are harping on the same string. Always you insist on *dharma*, you are emaciated following this stricture of the lazy useless people who generally dress up their frustration as renunciation. It is only the stupid who cannot earn their luck and prosperity, and begins to adopt this concept of renunciation which is otherwise useless and self-defeating –

> *bhavān dharmo dharma iti satataṃ vrata-karśitaḥ /*
> *kvacid rājan na nirvedam āpannaḥ klīvajīvikam //*
> *durmanuṣyāḥ hi nirvedam aphalaṃ svārthaghātakam /*
> *aśaktāḥ śriyamāhartum ātmanaḥ kurvate priyam //*[19]

". . . but mind it mahārājā", Bhīma continues, "mind it, one who takes trouble to perform the rituals of *dharma* for *dharma*'s sake cannot realize the true meaning of the Vedas. He is indeed not a wise person. Just as a blind man cannot realize the light of the sun, so one blinded by the injunctions of scriptures cannot realize the true meaning of life."[20]

The Mahābhārata also does not support the accumulation of wealth for selfish reason. It is just like that cowherd boy who protects the cows in the forest but cannot enjoy the drink of their milk nor can realize the goodness of it too.[21] The idea necessarily brings out the broader meaning of *artha* which, if duly resorted to, can satisfy the purpose of *dharma* and *kāma*. If we keep in mind the inner purport of the meaning of *dharma* in those days which comprised *dāna, yajña, sadācāra, veda* and *satya*, the ritualistic part of this *dharma* could not be pursued without the help of wealth and one who wants his ambitions (*kāma*) to be fulfilled, will first need wealth and money to satisfy his desires. According to the Mahābhārata, one who aspires to acquire wealth does so for a larger interest, like a king or a leader whose sole business is the welfare of his subjects – *arthārthī puruṣo rājan bṛhantaṃ dharmam icchati.*[22]

While both *dharma* and *kāma* need a common foundation for their existence, *artha* tends to be a very important philosophical element, nay the principal element in a big portion of the Mahābhārata. Thus the connotation of the word *artha* supersedes or surpasses its primary meaning (*arthārthī puruṣo rājan bṛhantaṃ dharmam icchati*) and tends to be an element that contributes to the greater interest of the society. The Mahābhārata metaphorically says: 'just as a mountain is a source of a number of rivers, *artha* is also the source of all the good deeds that help the process of preservation and perpetuation in human life'. If you put Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra and the Mahābhārata side by side you will see the unique agreement which differs only in the representation. While one is poetic, the other is prosaic. While in the Arthaśāstra we find *artha* as the principal end of life (*artha eva pradhāna iti kauṭilyaḥ*) [23] the Mahābhārata says, 'all efforts and actions proceed from the continuous accumulation of wealth and from the increasing deposit of wealth':

arthebhyo hi vivṛddhebhyaḥ sambhṛtebhyas-tatastataḥ /
kriyāḥ sarvāḥ pravartante parvatebhya ivāpagāḥ // [24]

While Kauṭilya says that *dharma* and *kāma* owe their origin in *artha: arthamūlau hi dharma-kāmau,*[25] the Mahābhārata emphatically says that *dharma*, *kāma* and happiness in the other world evolve from *artha*: *arthād dharmaśca kāmaśca svargaścaiva narādhipa.*[26]

It may be pointed out in this connection that in the Tantrayukti section of the Arthaśāstra, Kauṭilya first states the primary meaning of *artha* as the subsistence of mankind, *manuṣyāṇāṃ vṛttir-artha.*[27] The Mahābhārata indeed knew this primary meaning and asserted in the preliminary chapters of Śāntiparvan that without *artha* or wealth one cannot live his life: *prāṇa-yātrāpi lokasya vinā hyarthaṃ na siddhyati.*[28] So *artha* is the means by which one can earn his living. The broader and extended meaning which Kauṭilya attached to this word is a geographical area with population: *manuṣyavatī bhūmir ityarthaḥ.*[29] The Mahābhārata was aware of this extended meaning, if not the desired meaning of Kauṭilya. Whenever one raises the question of *artha* as a subject of inquiry, the Mahābhārata shows a presupposed notion of a geographical area which was the eternal source of *artha*. One could recall here Bhīma's eulogy for a geographical area or territory which may lead to all the prosperity of an aspirant king. He says, "...this earth is the food of all living beings, the movable and the immovable in this earth, all contain the food for living"-

prāṇasyānnam idam sarvam iti vai kavayo viduḥ /
sthāvaraṃ jaṅgamaṃ caiva sarvaṃ prāṇasya bhojanam //[30]

The meaning of *artha* as *manuṣyavatī bhūmi* in Kauṭilya, almost bears the modern definition of a state which comprises a geographical area, population, sovereignty and government. We have no such scope to discuss the corroboration of all these elements which can be smuggled into the meaning of *artha* in the Mahābhārata, nor shall we like to spin combinations like dilettantes on the superficial similarities in the definition of *artha* and that of modern state. We shall only like to say that the Mahābhārata always pleaded for the possession of a kingdom which meant maximum appropriation of the meaning of *artha*.

As the Mahābhārata says:

It is right that the forest-dwellers have nothing to do with accumulated wealth. But whatever wealth and prosperity this earth contains is earnestly longed for by even a common man who always pounces upon them as his. In such a state of mind there is no other need or asset like the possession of a territory which begets treasury for a king and which in turn begets *dharma* (discipline), *kāma* (pleasure) and a prospect in the future world.[31]

That the *artha* of the Mahābhārata has a direct reference to the acquisition of land (*manuṣyavatī bhūmi*) is covertly and overtly signified in the praise of acquiring a kingdom. The Mahābhārata says that there is no virtue like the possession of a territory. The accumulated wealth of a kingdom begets virtue (*dharma*) and pleasure (*kāma)* at the same time—which means a kingdom brings within one's grip the pleasures of this world and happiness in the other.

For the acquisition of *artha* the king should be ever alert, vigorous and ever enthusiastic. Although all these qualities have their philosophical root in *kāma*, these qualities in fact verge towards moulding the foundation of and laying the precondition for procuring wealth and land. In the very beginning of the *rājadharma* instructions in the Mahābhārata, Bhīṣma has cited Bṛihaspati to affirm that an aspirant king should be perpetually alert and ever-enthusiastic to rise to any action:

nīti-dharmānusaranaṃ nityamutthānameva ca /
utthānaṃ hi narendrāṇāṃ bṛhaspatirabhāṣata //
rājadharmasya tanmūlam ślokāṇścātra nibodha me /[32]

Bhīṣma explains this vivacity or this ever-active mood as the main source of acquiring wealth and quotes from his earlier teachers to show that he is not the only one to introduce the trick. Without the quality of endeavour and active mood, a king, even if he is endowed with rare intelligence, may be a subject of extortion and defeat in the hands of enemies just like a snake without poison falls an easy prey to a vigorous weaker species:

utthānahīno rājā hi buddhimān-api nityaśaḥ /
pradharṣaṇīyaḥ śatrūṇāṃ bhujaṅga iva nirviṣaḥ //[33]

This quality of *utthāna-śakti* of a king which is slated as a precondition to the acquisition of *artha* is also referred to by Kauṭilya in his Arthaśāstra, which clearly spells the word *artha* as a frame in the context and says,

Therefore being ever active, the king should carry out the management of his material well being (*artha*). The root of material well being is activity, of material disaster its reverse. In the absence of activity, there is certain destruction of what is obtained and what is not yet received. By activity reward is obtained and one also secures abundance of riches:

tasmānnityotthito rājā kuryād arthānuśāsanam /
arthasya mūlam utthānam anarthasya viparyayaḥ //
anutthāne dhruvo nāśaḥ prāptasyānāgatasya ca /
prāpyate phalam utthānāl-labhate cārthasampadam //[34]

We have seen that there is no difference between the Mahābhārata and Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* regarding the way (*sādhana*) by which one can achieve the end of *artha*. If we go back to the earlier reference to Bṛhaspati – who may be the mythical Bṛhaspati or that mythical teacher of materialistic philosophy – we should understand the desired meaning of the verses attributed to him. The verses refer to the mythical *deva-asura* duel that enabled the extraction of nectar from the churning of the ocean where the gods won the possession of the nectar by playing tricks with the *asura*-s, nay by killing them and thereby regaining the hold of the kingdom of heaven. That means, in the process of procuring *artha* one can, for greater interest, sometimes resort to trickeries or killing the enemies and this might be taken as a necessary condition for procuring *artha*.

Though beyond our context, it may be noted that the *Bṛhaspati-nīti* mixes the highest materialistic flavours with the matters of acquiring money and wealth. He is rather very crude and unambiguous when he says:

Try to earn money, one who has money has lots of friends, he has all piety, all knowledge, all education, and all other qualities. All strength and all intelligence are attributed to him. Those who have no money cannot amass wealth, it is not possible to catch an elephant without the help of an elephant. Mind it – this world has its roots in money. Everything is there where money is. The penniless one is either a dead man or a Barbarian.[35]

This crude encomium for *artha* has no difference with Arjuna's speech in the Mahābhārata. It says, "One who has money has friends and relatives. All the masculine attributes would be poured on him who has money. Even the people designate one as a wise man who has wealth. One who has no money but aspires to be rich cannot achieve his ultimate goal, because money begets money, it is possible to catch elephants only with the help of elephants-

adhanenārthakāmena nārthaḥ śakyo vidhitsitum /
arthair arthāḥ nivadhyante gajair iva mahāgajāḥ //[36]

In view of this corroboration of the materialistic Bṛhaspati-tradition in the Mahābhārata, we have only to note that the *artha* tradition was a very much living tradition that has issued indeed from the Brahminical heads of the earlier teachers and has been adopted by the elitist Kṣatriyas of the Mahābhārata and ultimately took its final shape in the handiwork of that formidable Brahmin Kauṭilya.

In all traditional writings of *rājadharma* one find such words like "wealth duly secured" or "duly amassed" etc. (*nyāya-sañcita artha, nyāya-lavdha artha, yathā-nyāya-sañcita artha*). This shows that a question of propriety in acquiring wealth and money (*nyāya*) was a precondition for any acquisition of land and money. Probably this was that Dharmaśāstra stricture which tried to punch its mark of honesty on a wayward tradition. But the Arthaśāstra tradition argued that statecraft could not be run by a mass of pious instructions. If one takes all the Machiavellian advices of Kaṇika in the Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata as evolving from the mouth of an evil minded minister to console an equally evil minded master like Dhṛtarāśtra, what should be said about the same crude advices of Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira in the Artha-viniścaya section of the Śāntiparvan. Yudhiṣṭhira has just startled up in fear and surprise and raised his hands to say: what an evil you forced me to hear. If this be your construction of *artha*, all the purpose of honesty and piety will be defeated:

saṃmuhyāmi viṣīdāmi dharmo me sithilīkṛtaḥ /
yadi ghoraṃ samuddiṣṭam aśraddheyam ivānṛtam //[37]

In fact the Artha-viniśchayạ section of the Śāntiparvan seems to be full of Machiavellian advices and it can be very well concluded that in the practical field of statecraft a king should have little care about the moral and ethical principles of procuring wealth. The principles uttered by various important personalities in different places and on different occasions in the Mahābhārata, specially Kṛṣṇa's manoeuvring the great war to the interest of the Pāṇḍavas outline a maverick course of *artha* tradition which did not keep into account the just and the righteous notions of *dharma* in the practical field of royal administrations and war.

The *dharma* tradition of procuring wealth through just and honest means had been upheld in many instances of the Mahābhārata, the foremost of which is the Tulādhārajājali-saṃvāda. Note the metaphoric name of the merchant Tulādhāra, a balance personified, who upholds the balance of *dharma* and *artha* with even-handedness and says: I earn my living preferably making no harm to anyone or by causing minimum discomfort to others and this living may be called the honest and ideal living:

adroheṇaiva bhūtānām alpadroheṇa vā punaḥ /
yā vṛttiḥ sa paro dharmastena jīvāmi jājale //[38]

This is really an idealistic model of earning a balanced living and may be the ideal of *dharma* tradition upheld by Yudhiṣṭhira and others in the Mahābhārata. Even the traditional conflict between the Dharmaśāstra-s and the Arthaśāstra-s also raged on this issue. The Dharmaśāstra writers like Yājñabalkya, Nārada, Kātyāyana took the side of Dharmaśāstra tradition. But the Arthaśāstra-s which had to work on the idealistic menace of piety and uprightness, could not and did not wholly overturn the existing and traditional norms of the Dharmaśāstra, but they kept an open space for the kings and politicians who could pursue their goal of *artha* in the shape of *rājadharma*.

One can easily notice a sort of inaction in the Dharmaśāstra nomenclature as is evident in the speech of Tulādhara who said that as an aged person or a patient or a sickly person loses all interest in the pleasures of the sensual organs, he too has no interest in either *artha* or *kāma*. And this cannot be an ideal of an aspirant king. The resigning attitude befitting a pious person belies all the statutory norms of the *artha*-tradition where the worth of a king or a leader is rooted in the endeavours or enthusiasm and which lead to the acquisition of land and wealth. Naturally the supporters of *artha*-tradition made a space for the kings and the leaders and it is for this reason Bhīṣma hurled a strike upon the *dharma*-stricken sentiment of Yudhiṣṭhira saying:

". . . you see my child, *dharma* is a very wide and multifaceted concept, it does not flow through a stipulated singular channel. The king has to innovate newer and newer methods to carry on the works of royal administration. It is the intuitive knowledge of a king that applies itself differently in different matters and this knowledge is not a mass of moral and ethical instructions coming down from the earlier scriptural stock:

naitacchrutvāgamādeva tava dharmānuśāsanam /
prajñā-samavihāro'yaṃ kavibhiḥ saṃbhṛtaṃ madhu //
bahvyaḥ pratividhātavyāh prajñā rājñā tatastataḥ /
naikaśākhena dharmeṇa yatraiṣā saṃpravartate //[39]

So a separate compartment of *dharma* which a king should evolve by the keen sense of argumentative logic (ā*nvīkṣikī*) growing out of intuition is created by the Arthaśāstra traditionalists. This has been aphoristically named as *rāj-prajñā* by Bhīṣma in the Mahābhārata, and this might have later been adopted by Kauṭilya who with all his political acumen called it *rāja-nyāya*, which stands superior to all other injunctions ordained by the Dharmaśāstra-s and traditional law. Kauṭilya trickily proposed that the *rāja-nyāya* would be preponderantly on the surface when the *dharma-nyāya* would exhaust its scope. The written instructions of *dharma* would just be useless when the *rāja–nyāya* would decide matters.[40]

We could quote hundreds of instances from the Mahābhārata as to how the interest of *artha* becomes the foremost expedient in the matters of state, society, economics and politics, but we shall restrain ourselves by only showing the reactions of Arjuna. When *dharma* or Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira stands as a menacing problem in the way of his accomplishment of *artha*, Arjuna tells Yudhiṣṭhira:

". . . you try to remember the mythical war between gods and demons. They are half-brothers and they had the same target of acquiring the kingdom of heaven. The gods however did not hesitate to subdue or kill them on any pretext. It is with this attitude of vengeance towards the brothers that the gods could survive and could regain their rule in heaven: *drohāt kimanyaj-jñātināṃ gṛhyante yena devatāḥ.*[41]

Again you see that the Brahmins learned the Vedas for educational purpose but they apply their knowledge to the performance of sacrifice either for themselves or for others. The ulterior motif behind this education and sacrifice therefore is money:

adhyetavyā trayī nityaṃ bhavitavyaṃ vipaścitā /
sarvathā dhanam āhāryaṃ yaṣṭavyaṃ cāpi yatnataḥ // [42]

Arjuna concludes, that if the gods and Brāhmaṇas plod their way in such a fashion it is axiomatic that the Kṣatriyas and the kings who are primarily concerned with the smooth running of a state would have no hesitation for the qualities like mercy, restraint, or endurance. The wealth gathered from others is the wealth of the king and this process of accumulation cannot happen without hurting others, because none can gather wealth without hurting anyone. The kings win over new territories, and immediately the new possession become their own, just like the heirs of paternal property having immediately succeeded to the property, term it as their own. Naturally if the way of acquiring wealth by the kings betrays any fault or so called dishonesty it cannot be said as dishonest, because the appropriation of wealth from others is their *dharma* i.e. *rājadharma*:

nānyān apīḍayitveha kośaḥ śakyaḥ kuto balaṃ /
tadarthaṃ pīḍayitvā ca doṣaṃ prāptuṃ na so'rhati //
akāryam api yajñārtham kriyate yajñakarmasu /
etasmāt kāraṇād rājā na doṣaṃ prāptum arhati //[43]

This shows that amidst the support for right actions, right behaviour, morality and moral propriety that nourished and nurtured the *dharma*-tradition in India, there was yet another strong *artha*-tradition which stood side by side to facilitate the ways of material gains. And this also vindicates the fact that the Mahābhārata never lost sight of the material desires of the common people whose aspirations and ambitions had the shield of *dharma* in some other way.

NOTES

1. *The Mahābhārata*, Ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition) 7.7.1
2. Ibid, 12.301.109
3. Ibid, 12.142.11 – 14
4. Ibid, 12.7.43. See also R. C. Zaehner, "*The Greatness of Man and the Wretchedness of God*" in *Concordant Discord*, Oxford, OUP,1970, pp.177
5. Ibid, 12.8.4
6. Ibid, 12.8.5 – 7
7. Ibid, 12.8.8 – 9
8. Ibid, 12.59.29 – 30. See incidentally Peter Hill, *Fate, Predestination and Human Action in the Mahābhārata*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001, pp. 69
9. Y. Krishan, "The Meaning of the *Puruśārtha*-s in the Mahābhārata", in *Moral Dilemmas in the Mahābhārata*, ed. Bimal Krishna Motilal, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 59
10. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 3.33.30, pp. 37 –38
11. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, ed. Durgācharan Sāṃkhya-Vedānta-Tīrtha, Kolkata, 4.4.5
12. Ibid, Vide the Commentary of Sankaracharya on 4.4.5 13.
13. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988(Reprint), Pt. 1, 1.7.3, pp. 8
14. Ibid, 1.7.4 – 5, p.b 8
15. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.167.2, 40

16. Ibid, 3.33.39
17. Ibid, 3.33.40 – 41
18. Ibid, 3.33.46
19. Ibid, 3.33.13 – 14
20. Ibid, 3.33.23
21. Ibid, 3.33.24
22. Ibid, 3.33.31
23. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988(Reprint), Pt. 1, 1.7.6, pp. 8
24. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.8.16
25. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988(Reprint), Pt. 1, 1.7.7, pp. 8
26. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.8.17
27. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988(reprint), Pt. 1, 15.1.1, pp. 280
28. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.8.17
29. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1988(reprint), Pt. 1, 15.1.1, pp. 280
30. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.10.6
31. Ibid, 12.130.45 – 50
32. Ibid, 12.58.12 – 13
33. Ibid, 12.58.14 – 16
34. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 91(reprint), Pt. 1, 1.19.35 – 36
35. *Bṛihaspati-sūtra*, ed. F. W. Thomas, Lahore, 1921, VI.7 – 12. See incidentally V. P. Varma, *Studies in Hindu Political Thought*, Delhi, 1959, pp. 66
36. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.8.19 – 20
37. Ibid, 12.142.2
38. Ibid, 12.262.6
39. Ibid, 12.142.3 – 4
40. *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, ed. R.P. Kangle, Delhi, Motilal

Banarsidass, 1988(reprint), Pt. 1, 3.1.43 – 45

41. *The Mahābhārata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar, New Delhi, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1979 (2nd Edition), 12.8.28
42. Ibid,12.8.27, 29.
    Mahamhopādhyāya Haridās Siddhāntavagīśa quotes in his commentary an old verse from a Smṛiti text to show that the Brahmana-s consciously knew about what they were going to gain by performing the rituals and by their education – *yajanādhyāpana-pratigrahair brāhmaṇo dhanam arjayet.*
43. Ibid, 12.130.36 – 37

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The Principle of *Kāma Puruṣārtha* in the Mahābhārata:

Its Conception and Variations

SHALINI SHAH

This paper seeks to analyse the principle of *kāma puruṣārtha* in the Sanskrit text of the Mahābhārata. There can be no unique interpretation of any concept lest of all the notion of *kāma* or desire in this text. In fact it will be a misnomer to refer to the Mahābhārata as a 'text', it is in reality an entire 'textual tradition'. As Maurice Winternitz [1972: 316] said about the Mahābhārata "It is not one poetic production at all, but rather a whole literature." It therefore contains so much and so many kinds of things that it would be difficult to talk of any homogeneity. Given this historical reality we find that the epic has preserved memories of a number of diverse traditions of different ethnic communities and of varied cultural complexes. We will try to unravel some of these variations in the conception of *kāma* or sexual desire.

In the Vanaparvan (32.18) Yudhiṣṭhira argues that a fool (*mūḍa*) given too much to the sexual and material desire finds a place in the hell. Bhīma equally forcefully (Vanaparvan 34.2) puts forward the view that along with *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* are equally desirous ends (i.e. *puruṣārtha*) and sitting idle in the forest retreat (*tapovana*) is not likely to help one achieve anything. In fact he considers, (Śāntiparvan 161.28) *kāma* as most important of all objects in human life. This dual opinion is part of the general *trivarga* debate which is found in all genre of Sanskrit literature be it Dharmaśāstra, Kāmaśāstra or Arthaśāstra. We also find that while a more hegemonic Brahmanical tradition seeks to valorize *dharma-puruṣārtha* at the cost of the other two ends of human life, this perception is not always shared by all the other discourses and by all categories of people. For instance Vātsyāyana in *Kāmasūtra* [1.2.15] recognizes the pre-eminence of *artha* for king and the *Veśyā*. Furthermore in the Ayurvedic text like *Caraka Saṁhitā* [*Sūtrasthāna* 11.3] *prāṇaiṣaṇā* comes before *dhanaiṣaṇā* with *paralokaiṣanā* coming right at the end.

No textual tradition can be analysed as a monolith, one major category of investigation/examination is the spatial context of the discourse. The Mahābhārata is, in its nuclear essence, the story of the Kuru-Pāñcāla *Janapada*, the very heart of the Brahmanical *madhyadeśa*. However, the wider text shows familiarity with the traditions of other regions as well. It is clearly recognized that these regions have their own norms and value system which might even be in total contrast to the Brahmanical patriarchal conventions of the *madhyadeśa*. In the Mahābhārata we get some interesting examples of regions where the notion of *kāma* for women is perceived very differently. Pāṇḍu says about *Uttara-kuru:* "Women formerly were not immured within houses and dependent on husbands and other relatives. They used to go about freely enjoying themselves as best as they liked . . . they did not then adhere to their husbands faithfully, and yet they were not regarded as sinful for that was the sanctioned usage of the time . . . the practice sanctioned by precedent is applauded by great sages. The practice is yet regarded with respect among the *Uttarakurus*. [Ādiparvan 113.4-8] The Sabhāparvan (2.24.15; 2.29.8) refers to the republic of Utsavsaṇkeṭas, which is described by Nīlakaṇṭha (Joshi, 1929: 49), a commentator of the Mahābhārata as a republic inhabited by the seven tribes of the Utsavsaṅkeṭas, who had no fixed laws of marriage and indulged in promiscuous intercourse.

Madra, Vāhīka and Ārhaṭṭa are also described as lands populated by libertime women or *Svairiṇs* [Karṇaparvan 30.40; 387*.1; 30.16-18]. The Anuśāsana parvan [20-21] too refers to the sexual excesses of women in the northern quarter (*uttaradiśā*) which according to Brahmanical description is a land of free behaviour, populated by licentious and self-willed women. Historically these areas were both no-monarchical as well as matrilineal in their Kinship structure [Shah, 2002: 24-42]. In fact Karṇa refers to the matrilineal Vāhīka women as *bandhakī* [Karṇaparvan. 392*.1] or sexually promiscuous. He states "intoxicated with drinks and divested of robes they laugh and dance outside the walls of the houses. In intercourse they are without restraint and in all other matters they act as they like." [Karṇaparvan. 30.15-16; 387*,1]. He repeats the same charge against the Madra women too [Karṇaparvan 27.85].We are told [Karṇaparvan. 27.75-78] that womeṇ of Madraka mingled of their own will, with men known and unknown. They sing incoherent songs and mingle lustfully with one another indulging all the while in the freest speech.

Buddha Prakash [1964:L 175] considers *Ārhaṭṭa* as a Prakrit form of *Arāṣṭraka* i.e. Stateless) which was a term applicable to all independent tribal non-monarchies of the Punjab. Furthermore, in the Śāntiparvan [67.12.17] when an *arājaka* state is described it is underlined that here there is no notion of individual property right over either wealth (*dhana*) or women (*dārā*). This association of an uncircumscribed female sexuality with non-monarchical tribal setup which were also perhaps matrilineal, is telling to say the least. We thus see that in all these liminal areas i.e. regions outside the patriarchal/Brahmanical *madhyadeśa* the notion of *kāma* for women is a very different one. It is also interesting to note that this promiscuity of women prevailing in Madra and Vāhīka is explained by the Mahābhārata [Karṇaparvan 30.58-59] as resulting from the curse of a Pativratā Satī - the "controlled" woman par- excellence of the Brahmanical patriarchy. Vāhīka is said to be inhabited by *Rākṣasīs* [Karṇaparvan 30.29] the promiscuous 'other' of the Brahmanical discourse. The Mahābhārata (Śalyaparvan 42.18) informs us that women due to their promiscuous behaviour (*Yonidoṣakṛtena*) turn into *Rākṣasīs.*

Overall the Mahābhārata narrates the success story of the triumph of patrilineal/patriarchal Brahmanical norms over resilient but marginal local customs of other cultures and regions. Nowhere is this triumph better illustrated than in the conception of sexual desire for women. The Mahābhārata refers to the story of Brahmin Śvetaketu who laid down a severe law against women's sexual transgression, in spite of promiscuity being more of a norm in an earlier period.

Śvetaketu declared [Ādiparvan. 113.17] that : "If a women is unfaithful to her husband it will be a sin equivalent to killing of a foetus i.e. *bhrūṇahatyā*". The control of female sexuality was a crucial issue within patrilineal/patriarchal societies. One of the basic dilemmas of the agnatic group is to deal with the anomalous presence of women who are in the group (husband's family) but not of it. It is only as mother that a wife secures a foothold in this group bound to it (now) through a blood tie. To ensure that this child was indeed of the same blood as the agnatic group it was essential that women's sexuality be controlled. However, the more significant dimension of the severity of measures for sexual control over women stems from the symbolic importance of sex in the competitive social environment situation in which agnatic groups exists. The ability of men to control their household and its resources as also its women is seen as an indicator of the strength of masculine reputation. Conversely an evidence of lack of control would indicate weakness and reveal men's vulnerability to other challenges in the public arena (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974: 253-54). The patriarchy then tried to valorize in the personality of *Satī* this sexual restraint on part of women who were otherwise suspected to be wanton or Pramadā [Anuśāsanaparvan 38.29] for that was their inherent nature or *strīsvabhāva.*

This aversion to allowing females an autonomy of desires was ingrained in them from a young age. The Epic thus underlines the importance of father's consent in union. Satyavatī tells Parāśara [Ādiparvan, 57.61]. "O holy one! know that I am a maiden under the control of my father." Kuntī for the same reason is hesitant to give herself to Sūrya. [Vanaparvan 290.22]. Tapatī tells Saṁvaraṇa "O King! I am not the mistress of my own self, know that I am a maiden under the control of my father. If you entertain an affection for me, demand me of my father." [Ādiparvan 161.14]. But within this setting of patriarchal control women could occasionally be allowed a self-choice. Thus both Sāvitrī and Damayantī had their father's blessing to choose a husband of their own accord. But many a times behind the façade of a *Svayaṁvara* there could be a more confining even violent social practices of patriarchy in operation—a fact which Ambā realized to her great sorrow. Even Draupadī was no more than a *Vīryaśulkā* the prize of a manly valour, where the terms of the contest were fixed by the father.

What is truly ironical about the patriarchal sexual norms is that while at one level they want women to practice sexual restraint at the same time they do not allow women the "agency" to sublimate this sexual desire towards the "higher end" of realizing *mokṣa puruṣārtha,* in other words women has no right to renounce *kāma.* Mahābhārata furnishes us with the example of one daughter of Kuṇīgarga [Śalyaparvan. 51.5-7] who chose to remain unmarried and perform severe austerities. However Nārada informed her that "she was still unmarried and hence devoid of the *saṁskāra.* So in spite of all religious merit acquired by *tapas* she will not be able to attain heaven. [Śalyaparvan. 51.11-13]. As a result the lady had to marry one Ṛagavāna, give one half of the merit so painstakingly acquired to him for his consent and only after consummating the marriage [Śalyaparvan 51.15-19] could she attain her salvation.

Mastery of senses is *dama* and it is a virtue that is always defined in the context of men. Women are never a participant in the inculcation of this virtue [Śāntparvan, 152.21; 154.9, 11; 213.2-18] what was affirmed through this conception of mastery over one's self, was the virile character of this mastery. Just as in the household it was man, who ruled it was only right that he alone should exercise self-restraint. Self-mastery was a way of being a man with respect to oneself [Foucault 1987; 82-83]. This does not mean that women were not expected to be moderate but moderation in their case was something that was imposed on them by their condition of dependence in relation to their families. For what was symbolized in women's chastity was not her own self- control as in the male celibacy but the control of her kinsmen over her behaviour. Thus, for a woman to establish self-mastery over her self (*indriya*) she had to establish a relationship of superiority and domination over herself that was virile by definition. We find that when daughter of Śāṇḍilya is able to achieve this self-mastery it is emphasized that she achieved something that was impossible for women [Śalyaparvan, 53.6-7; 304*.1] In fact the general opinion is that lack of sexual intercourse ages women - *asambhoga jarā strīṇām* [Udyogaparvan 39.63].

It is said about the Mahābhārata what is here may be elsewhere, but what is not here is nowhere else. Given this encyclopaedic nature of the source it is not surprising that traces of non-patriarchal socio-cultural complexes are also found in the epic. The social world of the *Rākṣasas* is the prime example of such a complex. *Rākṣasī Hiḍimbā* in the Mahābhārata like Śūrpaṇakhā and Ayomukhī in the Rāmāyaṇa [Shah 2005: 13-15] has no qualms in openly expressing her desire for Bhīmasena [Ādiparvan. 139.23-24]. Nor is she tongue- tied or coy in putting forward the proposal of marriage to Bhīma's Mother Kuntī [*ṇdiparva.* 143.5-7]. She is the mistress of her own erotic destiny. *Nāga* maiden Ulūpī [Ādiparvan 206.20] and Śarmiṣṭhā, daughter of *Dānava* Vṛṣāparvā are equally forthright [Ādiparvan, 77.12-13] in boldly demanding and obtaining satisfaction of their sexual desires. Apsarā Ūrvaśī in the Vanaparvan of the Mahābhārata is an archetype of a mother goddess who is not the 'spousified' goddess of the later Brahmanical religion. In the Epic we see Ūrvaśī enunciate a completely different sexual morality from that of a consort goddess. She pointedly tells Arjuna that all of us *apsarās* are *Anāvṛtā,* i.e. we are not veiled unapproachable women so do not put me in the place of an elder (*gurusthāne na mām niyoktum*). I am filled with great desire for you, do not reject me Vanaparvan, App. 6. 119-121]. Ūrvaśī openly sets about on her seduction of Arjuna and is presented as having a 'desiring' subjectivity (*manasā manmathena pradīpitā*) rather than existing as a mere fetishized object of the male erotic desires. We find her in complete command of the situation and when Arjuna turns down her proposal of a sexual dalliance she curses him [Vanaparvan, App. 6.134–35] to turn into a hermaphrodite (*Ṣaḍvad vicariṣayasi*).

The Mahābhārata is not without reference to an alternative conception of *kāma* other than the heterosexual one. In Anuśāsanaparva Pañcacūḍā tells Nārada that when women find no males at hand they satisfy each other's desires. Interestingly Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasūtra* [2.5.27] refers to lesbian practice in *Strīrājya* and further links this *Strīrājya* with Vāhīka [2.6.45] with whom it had certain practices in common. Historian R.S. Sharma [1983: 36-37] places *strī-rājya, stri-vāhya* or *nārī-viṣaya* as regions of women's rule in the north-west of India.

Apart from this example of Sapphic love we also get in the Mahābhārata an instance of male bonding between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna which is not entirely devoid of erotic overtones. In the Epic they are frequently referred to as *priyasakhā* [Ādiparvan, 210.5]. Their relationship reminds one of Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad.* In Ādiparvan [225.13] Kṛṣṇa asks Indra a boon of eternal friendship with Arjuna (*prītiṃ pārthena śaśvatīm*). In Vanaparvan [13.36] Kṛṣṇa declares to Arjuna—you are mine and I am yours. At another place, he states that Arjuna is more important to him than his wives, children or Kinsmen (Sauptikaparvan 12.27). His love for Arjuna surpasses all other loves (Droṇaparvan, 56.23). In fact he calls Arjuna half his body (Droṇaparvan, 56.30), dearer to him than even his own life (Droṇaparvan, 157.40) and states that he has no desire to enjoy anything without him (Droṇaparvan, 157.41). Throughout the Mahābhārata we get many references to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna enjoying pleasure trips in the company of each other (Āśvamedhikaparvan 15.12; 52.10 and Sabhāparvan, 14.33). The term that we get to describe their romp is *ramate* [Ādiparvan, 214.29] as in *ramate pārthamādhavo.* Ruth Vanita [2000: 4] points out that the term *ramate* used to describe pleasurable enjoyment is the same for both homosexual and heterosexual companionship.

V.S. Sukthankar (Critical Edition Ādiparvan, lxxix) in his introduction to the critical edition noted that there were compelling reasons to assume that the

"The Mahābhārata textual tradition must have been not uniform and simple but multiple and polygenous." And there had never existed as John Dunham [1991: 15] points out any agency religious or political which either desired or imposed any conformity on this wonderfully variegated textual tradition and reduce it to a single version. For this reason the notion of *kāma,* too as embodied in the great Epic was a multifaceted one.

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Illustration on the Front Cover:

The pediment from the National Museum of Phnom Penh presents some of the chief protagonists in the Mahābhārata: the five Pāṇḍava brothers and their enemies (the Kaurava brothers), as well as Kṛṣṇa and his older brother Balarāma, allies of the Pāṇḍava. Bhīma, the warrior brother of the fabled strength, leaps in the air to strike the Kaurava Duryodhana. Both combatants wield the mace, one of Viṣṇu's attributes, whose use they learnt from Balarāma. Watching Bhīma from the viewer's right are Yudhiṣṭhīra, Arjuna and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva. Kṛṣṇa, on the viewer's extreme left, is trying with his four arms to restrain Balarāma, holding a plough, from intervening in the struggle.

–*Courtesy* : Prof. Lokesh Chandra

Illustration on the Back Cover:

Arjuna piercing the surface of the earth with arrows in order to bring out a stream of underground water to quench the thirst of Bhīṣma fallen in the Mahābhārata war.

A miniature painting of Kashmiri school from an early 19th century manuscript of the Bhagavadgīta from Kashmir.

–*Courtesy* : Prof. G.C. Tripathi

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